



THE HEREAFTER

GL 102E



THE HEREAFTER

Translated by

Dr. Anunya Methmanus

Preface

The course material for the Worlds of the Hereafter, GL 102, is meant to educate the student about the hereafter as taught by the Lord Buddha. The Worlds of the Hereafter are the realms of existence subsequent to one's death from the Human Realm. The destination of which is determined by the individual's overall Kamma and the workings of the Law of Kamma. This law judges each human being's every thought, every word, and every deed. The course material has been gleaned from the Tripitaka (the Buddhist Canon) and other important texts on Buddhism. The Committee believes that a better understanding of how the Law of Kamma works, and the knowledge of the Worlds of the Hereafter will have a positive influence on the student's thoughts, words, and deeds. The knowledge gained from this course will enable the student to conduct his/her life in ways that are beneficial and in accordance with the Teachings of the Lord Buddha.

The preparation of this course material has been a team effort by the Committee members. It is possible that even after many rounds of editing and cross-editing, the material may still contain mistakes. The Committee hopes that it will receive comments and feedback that will allow it to further improve on the course material.

The Committee
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Course Syllabus

1. Description of the Course Material

GL 102: The Worlds of the Hereafter

It is the study of the birth, the life, and the cycle of life, death, and rebirth within the different realms of reality called Samsara. It includes the celestial pleasures of the States of Happiness, and the severe forms of punishment in the States of Unhappiness. The course material also includes the realms of reality that are removed from unwholesome attachments. The highest of these realms is Nibbana, which is the highest aim of all beings trapped within Samsara.

2. Course Objectives

1. To enable the student to understand the birth-death-rebirth cycle or the round of birth within the different realms of reality.
2. To enable the student to understand how an individual's deeds affect his life in the hereafter.
3. To enable the student to feel ashamed of sin, to be fearful of the destructive fruit of sin, and to continue performing only decent deeds.

3. Topics Covered in the Course

1. Overview of the Hereafter.
2. The States of Unhappiness.
3. The Human Realm.
4. The Celestial Realm.
5. The Form Brahma Realm.
6. The Non-Form Brahma Realm.
7. The Lokuttara Realm.
8. Nibbana.

Method of Study

1. Preparation for Self-Study

The steps for studying each chapter are as follows.

1. Spend an hour each day on the course material, and finish each chapter within one to two weeks.
2. Begin each lesson with an exercise to pre-test the student's comprehension of the course material, and to complete the exercises contained within the lesson. When the lesson is over, the student should assess his comprehension by completing the exercise at the end of the lesson.
3. Study the lesson along with other teaching aids especially via broadcasted programs as detailed in 5).

2. Self-Evaluation before and after the Lesson

The student should complete the pre-lesson self-evaluation form before beginning each lesson in order to gauge his prior knowledge of the topic. The student can then pay special attention to what he has no knowledge of. The student should also complete the post-lesson self-evaluation at the end of each chapter. The student would then know how well he has learnt the subject matter, and whether he is ready to proceed to the next chapter. A satisfactory grade is when the student scores correctly about 80% of the test. The self-evaluation will only be effective if it is carried out honestly.

3. The Text

Before beginning each chapter, the student should go over the layout of each chapter in terms of its topics, concepts, and objectives before proceeding with the detailed study.

After having finished reading the details of each topic, the student should write down its main points and complete the exercise provided at the end of each chapter. The exercise helps the student to self-evaluate his comprehension of the material studied. It helps the student to better his life by applying what he has learnt to his daily life. Therefore, for best results, the student should regularly practice what is given in the exercise.

4. The Exercises

The student should write down the main points of each lesson and complete all of the exercises provided. These exercises are crucially important to the study of the course material. The exercises should be completed by the student before checking the answers at the end of the chapter.

5. Long-Distance Learning via Satellite and Other Media.

The Foundation for the Study of the Dhamma for the Environment broadcasts its programs via satellite to enable people to study about the Worlds of the Hereafter as well as other Teachings of the Lord Buddha anywhere in the world. The student should endeavor to view these programs especially during the hours of the ‘Inner Dreams Kindergarten’. This special program offers teachings related to the Lord Buddha’s former existences, various case studies, etc. Additional learning can be obtained through E-learning, which DOU has provided especially for this purpose. Interested students can obtain further information about Long-Distance learning through the satellite from the DOU administration office.

6. Attending the ‘Inner Dreams Kindergarten’.

To further the student’s understanding of the Worlds of the Hereafter, the student should attend the ‘Inner Dreams Kindergarten’ that is broadcasted via satellite every Monday to Friday from 19:00 to 21:30 (Thai time). There are also reruns of the program as posted in the broadcasting schedule. The student can request the schedule from the DOU administration office.

7. Examination

The examination contains multiple choices as well as essays. Evaluation of the student’s comprehension of the course material is an important part of the study. However, it is more important that the student understands the course material well enough to apply it to his daily life. The completion of this course should allow the student to further his knowledge in the area, and to be able to live his life happily and appropriately anywhere.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE HEREAFTER

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW OF THE HEREAFTER

1.1 Main Points of the Course

- 1.1.1 What Is This Course About?
- 1.1.2 The Hereafter Is the Main Component of Samsara
- 1.1.3 The Hereafter Is Governed by the Three Characteristics
- 1.1.4 The Hereafter Is Universal

1.2 The Hereafter Is Located within the Three Spheres

- 1.2.1 Locations of the States of Happiness
- 1.2.2 Locations of the States of Unhappiness

1.3 Journey to the Hereafter

- 1.3.1 Our Understanding of the Law of Kamma Has a Tremendous Impact on Our Journey to the Hereafter
- 1.3.2 Types of Emotion Occurring in Individuals about to Journey on to the Hereafter
- 1.3.3 The Clearness or Gloominess of the Consciousness Is the Hereafter's Secret Code
- 1.3.4 Preparation for the Journey to the Hereafter

1.4 Proof of the Hereafter

- 1.4.1 Proof of the Hereafter during the Time of the Lord Buddha
- 1.4.2 Proof of the Hereafter Using the Lord Buddha's Methods

1.5 Benefits Derived from Studying the Hereafter

CONCEPTS

1. The study of the general characteristics of the Hereafter is the study of the ways of life within the three spheres that make up the never-ending 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle of Samsara. Life in these spheres is dictated by one's overall Kamma accumulated during one's human existences. The Hereafter is governed by the Three Characteristics, which include impermanence, suffering, and the absence of self.
2. The Hereafter encompasses the three spheres where all beings are trapped in and forced to endlessly undergo the round of rebirth. The Hereafter is made up of the States of Happiness and Unhappiness. If one has accumulated many decent deeds during one's current human existence, one is destined for the States of Happiness. However, if the accumulated deeds are mostly indecent, then one is destined for the States of Unhappiness.
3. The Human Realm is the only plane of reality where decent and indecent deeds can be accumulated. Since our time on earth is truly limited, we must make our self ready for the journey into the Hereafter by accumulating as much 'merit' as we can. We can do so by practicing charity, observing the Precepts, and practicing meditation on a daily basis. This way, we can be certain that we will journey toward the States of Happiness after we die.
4. Most of the world population does not believe in the Hereafter. Attempts made to prove the existence of the Hereafter by scientific means can never be successful. However, the Lord Gautama Buddha provided for us the method to prove the reality of the Hereafter over 2,500 years ago. The method involves the practice of meditation to such an elevated level that one attains the 'celestial eye'. The 'celestial eye' allows the practitioner to witness the round of rebirth of different beings within the different realms of reality.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to adequately and accurately describe the main points of the Hereafter.
2. To enable the student to describe the locations of the different spheres accurately.
3. To enable the student to accurately describe the ways to prepare for one's journey into the Hereafter.
4. To enable the student to accurately describe the method of proof of the
5. Hereafter as provided by the Lord Buddha.

OVERVIEW OF THE HEREAFTER

Introduction

All beings of this world undergo birth, existence, and finally decay. This is one law of nature discovered by the Lord Buddha, and was taught to us for our consideration and contemplation. The fact is nobody and nothing can escape this law of nature.

Human beings are considered to be more privileged than all the other life-forms on earth. Human beings of each earth period differ according to their life expectancy, their size, their food source, and their lifestyle. The human condition of each earth period depends on the level of purity of all the elements that make up the human form of the particular period. For example, human beings of this earth period have the ability to create all things material for our convenience but our life expectancy is only 75 years. And yet, human beings at other earth periods in the past lived to be thousands or tens of thousands of years old. Such are the differences among human beings of different earth periods.

Regardless of the differences, human beings of every period still cannot escape the law of nature as discovered by the Lord Buddha. The aging process, pain, and death are features common to us all. We all have to age, suffer, and die. No one lives forever. Everyone must die.

The pervading question since time began has been, ‘where do we go after we die?’ There have been many answers to this question. Some believe that death is final. Others do not believe that death is final. The fact is we do not know where we go after we die. Our beliefs affect our life in the Hereafter. If one believes that death is final, and does not bother to perform any decent deed, when one dies one will be destined for the States of Unhappiness. However, should one believe that death is not final, and one endeavors to do all kinds of decent deeds, one will have the opportunity to journey into the States of Happiness after one dies.

Since everyone must die, it is absolutely necessary that we study about the Hereafter so that we know the truth about these planes of existence, their life conditions, and how to prepare for our journey. Once we learn the truth we can better understand the reality of life, and we can better conduct our life in such a way that we can ensure our safe journey into the Hereafter. If we have accumulated enough good deeds but are not yet completely removed from our greed, anger, and ignorance, we can choose where we want to be in the Hereafter.

1.1 Main Points of the Course

Under this topic the student will have the opportunity to learn about the main points of the course. These include the life-forms and the life conditions of beings outside the Human Realm, and the locations of these realms of existence. The student will learn that these realms are still governed by the Three Characteristics, which are impermanence, suffering, and the absence of self. These places make up the round of rebirth of Samsara in which all creatures have been involved since time immemorial and will be for eternity.

1.1.1 What Is This Course About?

This course covers the knowledge about the Hereafter, which includes all the life-forms outside the Human Realm as taught by the Lord Buddha. This body of knowledge was recorded in the Tripitaka and other important texts on Buddhism.

The study of this course material should allow the student to better understand the reality of the Hereafter and allow him to be better prepared for his journey there after his last breath on earth. It should allow the student to disseminate the information to others so that they too can be better prepared for life after death.

1.1.2 The Hereafter Is the Main Component of Samsara

According to the Buddhist Teachings, one is not born only once but has been born countless of times and will continue to undergo the round of rebirth until the shore of Nibbana is reached. The Lord Buddha taught in the **Puggala Sutta** that:

The beginning and the end of Samsara cannot be determined. He said that when an individual underwent the round of rebirth within just one earth age¹, the pile of all of his bones could already be as high as a mountain.

The Lord Buddha's words demonstrate clearly that one's life does not end at death but continues on to the different planes of existence for eternity. One must continue thus until one can be completely removed from one's unwholesome attachments or defilements. These include greed, anger, and ignorance.

The 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle or the round of rebirth means the continuation of life and death within the three spheres, the four modes of births, the five destinations, the seven durations of consciousness, and the nine abodes. The round of rebirth continues from one realm of existence to another, from one mode of birth to another, round and round according to one's accumulated 'merit' and 'sin'.

¹ An earth age is the time period when the earth undergoes total annihilation, reforms, and re-populated.

The Three Spheres include 1) The Sense Sphere, 2) The Form Sphere, and 3) The Non-Form Sphere.

The Four Modes of Birth include 1) From the egg, 2) From the womb, 3) From contaminated moisture, 4) Spontaneous arising.

The Five Destinations include 1) The Hell Realm, 2) The Animal Realm, 3) The Peta Realm, 4) The Human Realm, 5) The Realms of Happiness (They include the Celestial Realm, the Form Brahma Realm, and the Non-Form Brahma Realm).

The Seven Durations of Consciousness includes the seven planes of consciousness as follows: 1) Beings that have dissimilar physical forms and perception; these include human beings, certain categories of celestial beings. 2) Beings that share similar perception but dissimilar physical forms such as the Brahma beings of the First Jhana (Parisajja, Purohita, and Mahabrahma). 3) Beings that share a similar physical form but dissimilar perception such as the Brahma beings of the Abhassara plane. 4) Beings that share a similar physical form and similar perception such as Subhakinha Brahma beings. 5) Beings that have attained the Realm of Infinity of Space. 6) Beings that have attained the Realm of Infinity of Consciousness. 7) Beings that have attained the Realm of Nothingness.

The Nine Abodes include the nine states of existence. They are the same as the Seven Durations of consciousness except that number five is replaced by beings that have no perception, no suffering such as the Asanyi Brahma beings. Numbers 5, 6, 7 become 6, 7, 8, and add 9) Beings that have attained the Realm of Neither Perception nor Non-perception.

The above categorization of the states and realms of the Hereafter is for the sake of convenience in terms of their description and application. Such categorization is analogous to grouping animals into two groups such as land animals and aquatic animals. Or they are grouped into three by adding amphibians. Or they can be grouped according to the number of their legs. Such categorizations are made for practical purposes.

All of the beings that are still trapped within the ‘birth-death-rebirth’ cycle of Samsara are like prisoners in a huge cell. All beings are like prisoners of war. All beings are like yoked oxen or oxen tied to a stake. In the **Mahasihanad Sutta**, the Lord Buddha told His Perfected Disciple, Sariputra, about life within Samsara that:

In His long journey within Samsara, there was scarcely a realm that He had not been born into except for the Five Realms of Suddhavas where the Non-Returners were reborn.

This Scripture shows clearly that prior to the Lord Gautama Buddha’s Enlightenment, he had had countless births, deaths, and rebirths in all the thirty-one planes of existence except for the Five Realms of Suddhavas of the Form-Brahma Realm. Since only the Non-Returners or Anagamis can have a rebirth in these realms. Therefore, all beings must continue to undergo this never-ending ‘birth-death-rebirth’ cycle of Samsara.

The journey within Samsara can be divided into three types as follows:

- 1. The Cycle of Hetathim:** It means the round of rebirth within the four lower realms. These are the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Animal Realm. The Hell Realm is further divided into the Hell of Mahanarok, the Hell of Ussadanarok, and the Hell of Yomalok.
- 2. The Cycle of Majjhim:** It means the round of rebirth within the seven middle realms. These are the Human Realm and the six realms of the Celestial Realm, which include the Catummaharajika Realm, the Tavatimsa Realm, the Yam Realm, the Tusita Realm, the Nimmanarati Realm, and the Paranimmitavasavatti Realm.
- 3. The Cycle of Uparim:** It means the round of rebirth within the twenty upper realms of the Form Brahma Beings that have attained the first Jhana to the fourth Jhana. These are Brahm-parisajja, Purohita, Mahabrahma, Parittabha, Uppamanabha, Abhassara, Parittasubha, Uppamanasubha, Subhakinha, Vehapphala, Asanyisatta, Aviha, Atuppa, Sutassa, Sutassi, and Akanittha. They also include the uppermost four realms of the Non-Form Brahma Realm. These are Akasanancayatana, Vinnanancayatana, Akincannayatana, and Nevasannanasannayatana.

This topic should enable the student to better understand the round of rebirth and the different planes of existence that all beings must undergo. Our existence is not a single birth and death within a single plane of existence. It is rather a cycle of countless existences that must continue until one can stop all indecent deeds and accumulate only good deeds to such an extent that one can rid himself of all unwholesome attachments and reaches the shore of Nibbana. The Worlds of the Hereafter exist because of the inherent unwholesome attachments within all beings. Existence in any particular realm is dictated by each being's overall Kamma. That is, the Law of Kamma propels each being to circulate ceaselessly within the different realms of existence according to each being's overall Kamma.

1.1.3 The Hereafter Is Governed by the Three Characteristics

As mentioned before, after an individual's physical death, life continues on in the Hereafter. The destination of which is dependent on his overall Kamma accumulated during his human existence(s). Some enjoy happiness in the Hereafter but others suffer tremendously. Still, the Hereafter is governed by the same Three Characteristics as the Human Realm. It is one law of nature that cannot be avoided in that every being undergoes birth, existence, and finally decay.

The Three Characteristics include impermanence, suffering, and the absence of self. These characteristics can be further described as follows:

Impermanence means that everything is impermanent and undergoes changes. It includes our body, our house, our belongings, those we love, etc. Everyone and everything changes accordingly. Nothing remains the same. It starts out as one thing and ends up as another. Take our body, for example, its skin was at one time clear and elastic. With the passing of time, it becomes dry and wrinkled. In the end our body dies and returns to its original elements. Such changes are termed impermanence.

Suffering in this context means that nothing **can** remain the same. Infants must grow to be teenagers. It is not possible to stop infants from growing. The body grows and changes as it must, it cannot stay the same.

The Absence of Self means that we own absolutely nothing. We may think that we own our money, our land, our house or our body. The fact is everything is made up of the original elements, which include earth, water, air, and fire to an exact composition. When the elements of our body are taken apart, our body no longer exists. It is the same with everything that we think we own. It is not ours. It is not under our control. If it is, we should be able to order our body and everything else to do and be as we desire.

Now that the student understands better about the Three Characteristics, he is ready to understand how it is that the Hereafter is governed by these characteristics. The Hereafter is made up of thirty-one planes of existence. All of which take on the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of self. The plane of existence may be grand with spectacular riches like those of the Sovereign of the Tavatimsa Realm. Or it may be a plane of raptures as experienced by the Brahma beings. The fact remains that one day, these fortunate beings will have to leave everything behind.

When the time comes for one existence to end, the consciousness will journey on to another plane of existence within Samsara. If the overall Kamma is negative, and the consciousness is clouded over by trepidation, it will descend to the States of Unhappiness and suffer the torments of one of the lower realms. If the overall Kamma is more positive than negative, the consciousness will enjoy the happiness within the middle realms. If the consciousness has reached a certain level of Jhana attainments through the regular practice of meditation, it will ascend upon one of the upper realms. When the term of existence is up, the consciousness will journey on within Samsara according to the dictate of its overall Kamma. It will continue to do so forever and ever until it can detach itself from its unwholesome attachments.

Beings of the Hell Realm may be reborn in the same site or in a new site depending on their accumulated misdeeds. Or they may be reborn in the Hell of Ussadanarok or the Hell of Yomalok. Or they may be reborn in the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm or the Animal Realm round and round ceaselessly.

The student can appreciate by now that the earth plane and the Hereafter are characterized by impermanence, suffering, and the absence of self. Therefore, the constant recycling of the consciousness within the planes of existence is plagued by these Three Characteristics. In addition, there is the annihilation of most of these planes of existence by the annihilating forces of fire, water, and wind. The total destruction of these planes is an eventuality that further amplifies their impermanence, suffering, and the absence of self. Everything undergoes decay, and we have no control over anything.

1.1.4 The Hereafter Is Universal.

The earth plane is a plane of differences. We are all human beings but we differ from each other in so many things and in so many ways. Some of us are beautiful. Others are homely. Some are born normal, others handicapped. Some are born in a wealthy family. Others are born in a poverty-stricken family. In spite of these differences, we all have one thing in common regardless of our position, wealth, race, or creed, and that is death. It is unavoidable. It is the law of nature.

Since death is unavoidable regardless of who we are and what we believe in, the same thing applies when it comes to life in the Hereafter. It is unavoidable. It is another law of nature in the same way that death is.

The teachings of many creeds in existence today contain different answers regarding to life in the Hereafter. Buddhism also teaches about life in the Hereafter but the answers provided by the Lord Buddha's Teachings are clear and rational. These Teachings were recorded in the Tripitaka. This body of knowledge was witnessed directly through the Lord Buddha's Buddha Eye, which was the result of His perfect meditative attainments. The Lord Buddha's Enlightenment allowed him to gain access to all of the knowledge in regards to the 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle of Samsara. The Lord Buddha witnessed the fact that everyone had to die and had to subsequently face the Hereafter.

The earth plane with its sun, moon, and stars can be universally experienced by all human beings regardless of their race and beliefs. In the same manner, the Hereafter can be universally experienced regardless of one's race and religious beliefs. It is like the law of any land that judges criminals of the same crime in the same way regardless of their race and religions. It means that jails are a universal destination for those found guilty by the law. Therefore, life in the Hereafter is a universal phenomenon whether it takes place in the States of Unhappiness or Happiness. It has nothing to do with one's personal beliefs but has to do with the truth. Since the truth about death cannot be denied, neither can the truth about the Hereafter.

Buddhism does not only teach about the Hereafter, but also teaches the method of proof. This is the main distinction between Buddhism and other religious teachings that may teach about the Hereafter but offer no method of proof. They only teach that if one disbelieves in the teachings, one will incur the punishment of sin. Buddhism teaches the truth about the reality of life as it is, and also teaches the way to proof it. Therefore, it is each student's responsibility to study the Scriptures and practice meditation in order to eventually witness the truth for himself.

1.2 The Hereafter Is Located within the Three Spheres.

Most human beings today do not study the Buddhist Scriptures and understand incorrectly that death is final. They believe that there is no rebirth. They do not believe in life in the Hereafter. Some individuals due to their lack of faith may have studied the Buddhist Scriptures but do not practice what they learn accordingly. They believe what they have learnt only superficially. Still, it is better than not to believe at all. Others form the wrong

belief that heaven and hell are all in the mind. That is, they do not believe in the actual existence of heaven and hell.

The study about the Hereafter is the study about the truth of these planes of existence as taught by the Lord Buddha. From the Buddhist Cosmology course, the student has already learnt the geography of the three spheres. All beings after their death must have a rebirth in one of these planes of existence which include all of the Human Continents. In this course, the student will learn about the location of the three sphere as well as the details of each plane of existence.

First, the student will learn about how a human being moves toward a different plane of existence during the process of rebirth. Briefly, after one dies, the consciousness of the dead will move out of his coarse physical form, which is the human body, and away from the earth plane. Instantaneously, the consciousness will assume a new physical form of the next plane of existence. The new physical form is a refined form composed of the four finer elements of earth, air, fire, and water. The next destination of the new physical form is dictated by one's overall Kamma accumulated during his previous human existence. The dead body will decompose into its four original elements.

Next, the student will learn that according to the Lord Buddha's Teachings, the planes of existence can be divided into two main categories. These are the States of Happiness and the States of Unhappiness. They can also be divided further into the three spheres of the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, and the Non-Form Sphere. The total number of the planes of existence is thirty-one. Each method of categorization allows for an easier application and description of the subject. The student will now learn about the location as well as the name of each realm. Each realm provides a uniquely different way of life.

1.2.1 Location of the States of Happiness.

The States of Happiness are congenial places that provide their inhabitants with happiness. These are places of rebirth for former human beings that have accumulated mainly positive Kamma during their years on earth. Individuals that have accumulated a decent amount of positive Kamma with no or a few negative Kamma may have their rebirth in the Human Realm. Individuals with a large amount of positive Kamma will rise spontaneously in the Celestial Realm, and live out their life in ecstasy for an unimaginably long time. The States of Happiness include:

The Human Realm consists of **only one** realm and belongs to the Sense Sphere. It is the realm for the accumulation of decent and indecent deeds. The Human Realm consists of four Human Continents as follows:

1. The Continent of Pubbaviteha. It is located to the east of the Great Mount Sineru.
2. The Continent of Aparagoyan. It is located to the west of the Great Mount Sineru.
3. The Continent of Jombu. It is located to the south of the Great Mount Sineru.
4. The Continent of Uttarakuru. It is located to the north of the Great Mount Sineru.

The Celestial Realm contains **six** different realms and belongs to the Sense Sphere. These planes of existence are arranged according to the level of positive Kamma in ascending order. The name and location of each realm is as follows:

1. The Catummarajika Realm: It is located on the slopes of the Great Mount Sineru.
2. The Tavatimsa Realm: It is located on top of the Great Mount Sineru.
3. The Yama Realm: It is located above the Tavatimsa Realm.
4. The Tusita Realm: It is located above the Yama Realm.
5. The Nimmanarati Realm: It is located above the Tusita Realm.
6. The Paranimmitavasavatti Realm: It is located above the Nimmanarati Realm.

The Form Brahma Realm contains **sixteen** realms and forms the Form Sphere. These realms are arranged according to the level of Jhana attainments in ascending order. They are located above the Celestial Realm. The higher up the realm is, the larger it is. However, some of the realms share the same altitude. Please refer to the map.

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Parisujja | 9. Subhakinha |
| 2. Purohita | 10. Vehupphala |
| 3. Mahabrahma | 11. Asanyisatta |
| 4. Parittabha | 12. Aviha |
| 5. Uppamanabha | 13. Atappa |
| 6. Abhassara | 14. Sutassa |
| 7. Parittasubha | 15. Sutassi |
| 8. Uppamanasubha | 16. Akanittha |

The Non-Form Brahma Realm contains **four** realms and forms the Non-Form Sphere. The realms are located above the Form Brahma Realm. They are located one above the other. The higher up the realm is, the larger it is with the fourth realm being the largest.

1. The Akasanancayatana Realm.
2. The Vinnanancayatana Realm.
3. The Akincannayatana Realm.
4. The Nevasannasannayatana Realm.

1.2.2 Location of the States of Unhappiness

The States of Unhappiness are the places of horrible sufferings. These are places of rebirth for human beings that have committed mainly negative Kamma. The categorization of these realms can be compared to different parts of a prison, which are places of confinement and punishment depending on the gravity of the prisoners' crimes.

The States of Unhappiness contain four realms and belong to the Sense Sphere. The realms are arranged according to the severity and the amount of the accumulated negative Kamma in descending order.

- 1. The Hell Realm.** It is located beneath Mount Trikut. It contains eight large sites (the Hell of Mahanarok). Each site is surrounded by the satellite sites (the Hell of Ussadanarok) in all four directions in groups of four. These satellite sites total 128. Further away from the Hell of Ussadanarok are the minor sites of the Hell of Yomalok. They surround each group of the four sites of the Hell of Ussadanarok in all four directions. Each direction contains ten minor sites, the total number of which is 320.
- 2. The Animal Realm.** It is located on the earth plane.
- 3. The Peta Realm.** It is located within the crevices of Mount Trikut. Part of it is located as a parallel plane of existence on the earth plane.
- 4. The Asurakaya Realm.** It is located within the crevices of Mount Trikut. Part of it is located as a parallel plane of existence on the earth plane.

Now that the student has learnt about the location of the Hereafter, the student should have an understanding of where these places are in relation to the Human Realm. It is interesting to note that there are parallel planes of existence on the earth plane right where we are. We cannot see them with our eyes because their refined physical forms are invisible to us. They however can see us clearly. The student may have heard stories about the appearance of the refined physical forms of ghosts. Having learnt the details about the location of the Hereafter, the student should now have a better understanding of its reality.

1.3 Journey to the Hereafter

The timing of our death is unknown. Death follows us like a shadow. Death is like an executioner with a raised sword being at the ready to strike us down. Unbeknown to them, the majority of human beings is living their lives recklessly and is totally unaware of the implication of their death.

Aging and death have followed us since the instant of our conception. This truth has been concealed to us. From the outside, our body is growing and showing all the vital signs. It is not until we reach middle age that signs of aging become apparent, and can no longer be concealed. Finally, we face our final physical destruction in the form of death. Some individuals die prematurely. The learned called the changes in our body as the process of passing away, which means that our body deteriorates, decomposes and disappears.

The final moments prior to death, before our refined physical form leaves our coarse physical form, are some of the most crucial moments in our life. It is the time of choosing the destination of our future existence. It also attests to the success or failure of our current existence. It is the time for the great battle that determines the fate of our future life. It is the

time to decide our next plane of existence, whether it will be in the States of Happiness or Unhappiness. It is all decided during these final moments of our life.

1.3.1 Our Understanding of the Law of Kamma Has a Tremendous Impact on Our Journey to the Hereafter.

The Law of Kamma is absolutely meaningless if there does not exist the never-ending 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle of Samsara as mentioned earlier. We may wonder why a decent individual has to live a life of hardship, and why an indecent individual can live a life of luxury. We may also wonder what causes the vast differences among individuals. Scientific and technological progress of the recent times cannot come up with an answer that can clearly explain these phenomena. However, Buddhism has had all the answers for longer than 2,500 years through the Lord Buddha's Enlightenment. Through the Lord Buddha's enlightened knowledge, we learn that the vast differences among all beings are caused by the Law of Kamma.

The main reason that many individuals do not believe in the Law of Kamma comes from the fact that they cannot prove the existence of the Law within the short span of their lifetime. For example, he cannot live long enough to witness the fruit of all of his Kamma.

Here, it will be shown that our belief or disbelief in the Law of Kamma has a decided effect on our journey to both the States of Happiness and Unhappiness. Believing in the Law of Kamma is part of the 'Right View of Ten'.

The word Kamma has a neutral meaning, and is meant in Buddhism as an intentional act. It is an act performed through one's physical, verbal, and mental means whether decent or indecent. As long as these acts are acts of intention, they are termed Kamma.

A positive Kamma means an act that is decent, virtuous, and innocuous. Examples of positive Kamma include an act of charity, helping out one's friends and relatives in times of need. A negative Kamma means an act that is indecent, immoral, unethical, and harmful. Examples of negative Kamma include killing, exploitation.

The consequences of positive and negative Kamma are called 'fruit', and are determined by an iron rule. Hence, the iron rule that governs the fruit of Kamma is called the Law of Kamma. It is the law of iron and does not need any personal interpretation. It judges every Kamma most impartially and most exactly. It is the law of cause and effect. Anyone that believes in the cause and effect of everything must believe in the Law of Kamma. The main theme of the Law of Kamma is, 'A positive Kamma leads to a positive fruit. A negative Kamma leads to a negative fruit.' The Lord Buddha stated in the **Cullanandiya Jataka** that:

Whatever Kamma a man did, he could witness it within him; whoever performed a positive Kamma would receive a positive fruit; whoever committed a negative Kamma would receive a negative fruit; whatever one sowed, so would one reap.

Since we perform a mixture of positive and negative Kamma on a daily basis, it is impossible to witness the manifestation of the fruit of each Kamma. Therefore, it generally appears as though the manifestation of the fruit of Kamma does not comply with the above saying. This causes many individuals to doubt the existence of the Law of Kamma. However, the Lord Buddha confirmed the fact that:

Whatever Kamma one performed, one would definitely receive the fruit of that Kamma. The Buddha stated in the Papawaka Scripture that whatever negative Kamma one performed, one could never escape the fruit of that negative Kamma.

From all that has been said so far regarding the Law of Kamma, the student should by now gain a better understanding of this law. The Law of Kamma is the law of exactness. The student can also appreciate that the fruit of our overall Kamma can show up in our lifetime, and determine our destination in the Hereafter. The Lord Buddha taught that:

Immoral individuals were destined for the Hell Realm; virtuous individuals were destined for the Celestial Realm; individuals devoid of any defilement were destined for Nibbana.

It is most likely that a non-believer of the Law of Kamma will not bother to perform any decent deed. On the contrary, he is more than ready to commit indecent deeds physically, verbally, and mentally. When he dies, it is certain that he will have a rebirth in the States of Unhappiness. However, a believer in the Law of Kamma is fearful of the consequences of all indecent deeds. He is more likely to be conscientious in accumulating only positive Kamma. For certain, his rebirth in the Hereafter will be in the States of Happiness.

It is for these reasons that the earth plane is the very place for accumulating both 'merit' and 'sin'. Whoever performs positive and negative Kamma in whatever amount, however light or grave, will receive the exact fruit of his overall Kamma. Therefore, believing in the Law of Kamma is of great personal benefit. The belief should be planted deep within our consciousness. When we believe firmly in the Law of Kamma, we can be guided to live a good and happy life. We will be enthusiastic in performing only decent deeds because we anticipate the fruit of our positive Kamma both now and in the Hereafter. When this is the norm, peace on earth can be assured.

1.3.2 Types of Emotion Occurring in Individuals about to Journey on to the Hereafter.

It is not commonly understood that a dying individual generally experiences one of the three types of emotion which leads one's consciousness to rise spontaneously in the different realms of the Hereafter.

1. Kamma-Emotion: It is the emotion that arises from one's overall Kamma. One's deeds over his lifetime will appear for his personal viewing. For examples, the regular slaughtering of cattle, the arguments, abusive remarks made to one's parents, habitual drinking, and habitual stealing. These scenes will be shown very clearly and in great detail to a dying individual. The consciousness retains the scenes and emotions of these deeds, which negatively affect his journey toward the Hereafter.

2. Implements-Emotion: If a dying individual does not experience any Kamma-Emotion, he will experience what is termed Implements-Emotion. These implements are the tools that the dying individual has used to perform decent or indecent deeds over his lifetime. For example, the tools used in slaughtering cattle include a knife, a hammer, etc. The utensils used in offering food to the Buddhist monks include a rice bowl, a ladle, etc. Pictures of these implements will appear to a dying individual. His consciousness retains the memories and emotions of these implements, and they affect its clarity and brightness.

3. Destination-Emotion: If a dying individual does not experience any Kamma-Emotion, he will experience what is termed Destination-Emotion. It includes scenes of his future destination. Sometimes the scenes are unfamiliar to him, sometimes they are. For example, they may see images of people or animals.

Most of the time, we do not know in advance where we will be reborn in the Hereafter, unless we experience a vivid Destination-Emotion. For example one may see a place of pitch darkness with dark hot flames and a frightful looking being holding devices of torture that one has never seen before in his life. In this case, the dying individual will definitely be destined for the Hell Realm. The particular realm and site of rebirth is determined by the dying individual's overall negative Kamma. When such frightful scenes appear before the dying individual, he will wince and quake with fear. He will cry out loudly, and waved his arms about in terror.

Sometimes, a dying individual sees a beautiful place filled with good-looking individuals resplendently attired. On their faces is an expression of tremendous joy and happiness. Beautiful music unlike anything he has ever heard before is everywhere. The scenes arouse in the dying individual a sense of overwhelming joy and make him smile. The individual dies peacefully. His Destination-Emotion indicates that he will be reborn in the Celestial Realm.

Some individuals experience a mixture of scenes because he has performed a mixture of positive and negative Kamma such as making merit at the temple and drinking alcohol. During their dying moments, they will experience a mixture of emotions, both of the States of Happiness and Unhappiness. When this happens, the Destination-Emotion that appears last will have the strongest impact on the consciousness. It will lead the refined physical form to appear accordingly in one of the planes of the Hereafter.

These three emotion types will occur to all beings be they human or animals. Each emotion type occurs very rapidly in a dying person. In a situation where the individual is unaware of his own death, his refined physical form will roam aimlessly in search of a new rebirth. However, as soon as he can recall his accumulated 'merit', the memories of the merit-making activities will lead him to the States of Happiness.

Should his 'sin' or the fruit of his negative Kamma catch up with him first, he will be taken to the Hell of Yomalok by celestial guards to await his hearing before the celestial judge's throne.

Once a dying individual experiences one of the three emotion types and before the consciousness leaves the body, he will experience his three last breaths. Some individuals experience these three breaths very succinctly. Some experience them lightly. Some are not visible at all. It all depends on the individual's type of emotion. These three final breaths are the result of the consciousness dissociating itself from the coarse physical form. It does so as it goes through the seven bases of the body. Once the process is completed, the individual is dead. The consciousness assumes a new physical form immediately.

1.3.3 The Clearness or Gloominess of the Consciousness Is the Hereafter's Secret Code

The student has now learnt that the Law of Kamma and our overall Kamma determine our Hereafter. All of our acts throughout our lifetime be they through our body, our words or our thoughts have been recorded in the best audiovisual recorder in the world. It has unlimited capacity. This recorder is our consciousness. Moments before death, it will replay all of our acts for our personal viewing, which will affect the emotion type we will experience.

If the scenes are about our decent deeds that have been accumulated throughout our life, our consciousness will be clear and bright. This is the secret code to the States of Happiness. On the contrary, if the viewing contains scenes of indecent, immoral deeds, our consciousness will turn dark and brooding. This is the secret code to the States of Unhappiness.

When one's consciousness is dark and brooding, one's destination is the States of Unhappiness. For individuals that have committed indecent deeds all their lives and cannot witness any scene of decent deeds, their refined physical form will be pulled toward the States of Unhappiness in accordance with their transgressions. For example, a habitual drinker that dies with a dark and brooding consciousness, his refined physical form will be pulled immediately toward the fifth realm of the Hell of Mahanarok. The realm is filled with hot, black hell flames that are billions of times hotter than an ordinary fire on earth. The naked hell being will be immediately seized and pinned to the ground by huge, frightful-looking hell denizens with pitch black skin. The hell being will be force-fed hot, black acid until the highly corrosive liquid disintegrates the body of the hell being to the point of death. When it rises spontaneously back up again, the horrid tortures resume. This cycle of events occurs over and over again for trillions of years.

When one's consciousness is neither dark nor light, it is destined for the Hell of Yomalok. In this case, one's refined physical form may wander aimlessly on the earth plane after his physical death. Due to his ignorance of the death and rebirth processes, he feels at a loss in terms of what to do next. He goes around visiting relatives and friends but finds that he cannot successfully communicate with anyone. There is a waiting period of seven days in which time each refined physical form is allowed the opportunity to recall his accumulated 'merit'.

When the seven days' period is up, if the refined physical form is still confused or cannot recall any accumulated 'merit', he will naturally return to the place of his death. At that time, celestial guards from Yomalok will appear at the scene. These guards possess certain characteristics namely, curly hair, dark complexion, huge and protruding eyes, a large and brawny physique. They wear no shirts but only a red loincloth. They may arrive with balls and chains and other weapons depending on the expected level of defiance of the departed. If the departed individual happens to be a high-ranking officer in the armed forces and puts up a lot of resistance, he will be bound with balls and chains and unceremoniously dragged toward Yomalok. If he puts up with more resistance, he will be mercilessly beaten.

When the party arrives at the court, the recently departed will be pushed toward many other refined physical forms that are already there. All are waiting for their names to be called. When the individual's name is called, the refined physical form will kneel in front of the judge's throne to await his judgment. During the hearing, scenes of the decent and indecent deeds of the individual will appear in space in front of the celestial judge's throne. The individual can witness all of his past deeds. Should the judge find the ledger of 'merit' to be weightier than the ledger of 'sin', he will pass a verdict that allows the individual to have a rebirth in the States of Happiness. Very frequently, the rebirth takes place in one of the lower realms. Should the ledger of 'sin' be weightier, the judge will sentence the individual to the States of Unhappiness. The individual may receive his punishment directly in the Hell of Yomalok or have a rebirth as a Peta (Hungry Ghost), an Asurakaya (Thirsty Ghost), an animal or he may be sent to the Hell of Mahanarok. It all depends on the gravity and level of his 'sin'.

When the consciousness is clear and bright at the time of death, it will be destined for the States of Happiness. For an individual that has accumulated decent deeds through most of his life, he will be able to recall these positive deeds while he is on his deathbed. His decent nature and the memory of his decent deeds will light up his consciousness. He will die peacefully. When the refined physical form leaves the body, it will transform itself into a glorious celestial form. His new physical form may appear within his celestial castle or he may be taken there by his celestial vehicle. It all depends on the amount of his accumulated 'merit'.

It is a fact that everyone continues to live in the Hereafter. We should not rush to conclude that just because we cannot see it, it does not exist. It is better that we allow ourselves the opportunity to study relevant teachings about the Hereafter whether or not we find them believable. The reason is it is safer to have some knowledge of the Hereafter than to be totally ignorant of it. For students with the Right View of Ten and believe in the Lord Buddha's enlightened knowledge and in the fact that He is the Master Teacher of all beings in both the Human and Celestial Realms, the belief will make them safe and victorious. They have Nibbana as their final destination.

1.3.4 Preparation for the Journey to the Hereafter

Once we depart from the Human Realm, we can no longer accumulate any new 'merit'. We either enjoy the fruit of our accumulated 'merit' or suffer the horrific consequences of our accumulated 'sin'. Should an individual obtain his rebirth in the States of Unhappiness, he will suffer horrifically for an unimaginably long time. Should an

individual have his rebirth in the States of Happiness, he will enjoy the unimaginable ecstasy there for a long, long time as well. Therefore, it is up to us to prepare ourselves so that we can enjoy the ecstatic fruit of our ‘merit’, which has been accumulated during our human existence. It all depends on us. It is important to know that we can choose the course of our future existences by accumulating as much ‘merit’ as we can while we can. Our accumulated ‘merit’ is all that we can depend on in both this and future existences as taught by the Lord Buddha in the Ruchumalawiman Scripture. Our ‘merit’ blesses us with success and prosperity both now and in the Hereafter.

a. Types of Disposition and Performance of Decent and Indecent Deeds

Before we go further, we need to first study the types of disposition evident in human beings. There are four different types as follows:

Type I This individual enjoys practicing the ‘Ten Ways of Making Merit’. He is in the habit of giving to charity, observing the Precepts, and practicing meditation. Just before death, he can easily recall all the ‘merit’ that he has enjoyed accumulating because it is integrated into his being. His Kamma-Emotion is positive and clear. At death, he is destined for the States of Happiness.

Type II This individual habitually performs a mixture of decent and indecent deeds. He may attend sacred ceremonies at the temple, he may butcher animals for food or commerce, or he may drink alcohol. Just before death, if he is conscious and can be encouraged by his visiting relatives and friends to recall his decent deeds, during the final battle, he might be able to win and journey on to the States of Happiness. However, most terminally ill individuals tend to suffer enormous pain and discomfort and are not in the position to think coherently. If they lack an encouraging relative or friend to remind them of their good deeds, there is a good chance that they will lose the final battle and be reborn in the States of Unhappiness. Most frequently, an individual that has performed a mixture of decent and indecent deeds will be escorted to the Hell of Yomalok to await further judgment.

Type III This individual tends to perform more indecent deeds than decent deeds. He is most likely living off his ‘merit’ accumulated in his previous existence(s). He cannot appreciate the necessity to give to charity or earn any ‘merit’. He is self-assured and believes that he meets with success in life solely because of his personal abilities. He believes that it is enough that he lives a good life, and does not cause any problems for others. He may contribute to the temple or to other charity causes once in a while but cannot be bothered to observe the Precepts. He believes in having a good time and indulges in whatever form of entertainment that pleases him. When death is near, he cannot readily recall his deeds of ‘merit’. His Kamma-Emotion will reflect his habitual transgression of the Precepts, hence his violation of the Law of Kamma. He may be encouraged to recall his good deeds by well-wishing relatives and friends. But he can hardly do it, since he has never really believed in the power of ‘merit’. In this case, he is most likely destined for the States of Unhappiness.

Type IV This individual performs only indecent deeds. He has the ‘Wrong View’ and does not believe in the consequences of ‘merit’ or ‘sin’. He does not believe in the reality of heaven or hell, or the Law of Kamma. He cannot be bothered to perform any

decent deeds at all. On his deathbed, his Kamma-Emotion will cause all of his indecent deeds to appear to him. His consciousness will turn dark and brooding, and he is destined for the States of Unhappiness.

Now that the student has learnt about the four main types of human disposition, the student can judge which type he belongs to at the moment. He can also decide for himself which type he aspires to be. We do have a choice between the States of Happiness and the States of Unhappiness. Next the student will learn about the ways that decent deeds can be performed.

b. The Accumulation of ‘Merit’ in Preparation for the Hereafter

The Lord Buddha discovered one important fact, which states that the Human Realm is the only plane of existence for the accumulation of ‘merit’. Once we die, our opportunity to accumulate any new ‘merit’ is gone. One may ask why we must accumulate ‘merit’ at all. The main reason is the deeds through which we can earn our ‘merit’ are the very means of starving our unwholesome attachments. When these attachments can be completely removed, that is the time we can attain Nibbana. But if they cannot be completely removed just yet, the accumulation of ‘merit’ allows us to enjoy our celestial bliss in the Celestial Realm after we die. After we cease to be in the Celestial Realm, we can be reborn in the Human Realm to continue accumulating more and more ‘merit’, and to continue practicing according to the Dhamma. Our accumulated ‘merit’ will bless us with good looks, wealth, and desirable personal traits. If an individual’s accumulated ‘merit’ is lacking, he risks going to the States of Unhappiness and will suffer horrific torments for an unimaginably long time. After he has served his sentence and is reborn in the Human Realm, chances are that he will be reborn handicapped physically and/or mentally. Such physical and mental states make it much harder for him to perform decent deeds and accumulate new ‘merit’. It will be much more difficult to accumulate the optimum amount of ‘merit’ that is necessary for the complete removal of his unwholesome attachments. He is consequently destined for the round of rebirth for eternity. Therefore, our accumulated ‘merit’ is the most important provision for our long and difficult journey within the realms of Samsara.

Next, we shall consider the basic fundamental of ‘merit’, its meaning, its characteristics, and the means of accumulating ‘merit’ for our victorious journey in the Hereafter.

‘Merit’ is a form of pure energy that occurs in our consciousness each time we intentionally abandon indecency, and endeavor to perform only decent deeds. Decent thoughts, decent words, and decent deeds keep our consciousness clear and bright. Such endeavors can improve the quality of our mind.

‘Merit’ possesses two characteristics, which include: 1. ‘Merit’ can be accumulated in the same gradual manner that every drop of water can eventually fill a water vessel. ‘Merit’ is stored in our consciousness. 2. ‘Merit’ can be dedicated to the dead wherever they may be, however far away they may be. It is analogous to water that can flow from an elevated plane across a great distance toward the ocean.

According to the Lord Buddha's Teachings, the means of accumulating 'merit' includes the 'Ten Ways of Making Merit', which can be summarized as the achievement of charity, the observation of Precepts, and the practice of meditation.

These ways of making 'merit' can be briefly described as follows:

1. Preparation for the Journey into the Hereafter by the Achievement of Charity

Giving to charity causes is the basic decent deed that everyone must perform. The reason is our very survival depends on charity. Without charity, our earth plane will be filled with chaos because parents will not take care of their children, children will not take care of their aging parents, teachers will not teach their students, etc. Without charity, our earth plane would become a mess.

Charity means giving. It serves the main purpose of scrubbing the mind free of parsimony on the part of the giver. It serves to aid on the part of the receiver. We give from the goodness of our heart for the purpose of helping others and for the purpose of accumulating our 'merit'. Giving to the 'Sangha' (Buddhist monks) that practice righteousness according to the Dhamma-Discipline is the means of earning the maximum 'merit'.

There are three basic principles involved in making the most 'merit' through our charity. These include: a) the purity of the alms. It means the alms that are given as charity have been obtained by an honest means. They are not stolen items or they are not bought by money that comes from wrong livelihood, etc. b) The charity is made with pure intention before, during, and after the act. One gives to others in need in order to remove one's miserliness, and not for other purposes such as to gain fame or recognition. c) The recipient of the charity is chaste. A high level of 'merit' can be made when both the donor and the recipient observe the Precepts meticulously.

According to the Tripitaka, there are ten items that can be offered to the Buddhist monks. These include rice, water, cloths, vehicles, flowers, scented items, skin treatments, bedding, shelter, and lamps and candles.

Details concerning the achievement of charity can be found in the course book 'The Buddhist Way of Life'. Suffice it to say that the first preparation for the journey toward the Hereafter is the achievement of charity. The student must be cognizant of the factors involved in making the most 'merit' through his charity. It should be borne in mind the fact that the 'Sangha' or Buddhist monks provide the most fertile field for cultivating one's 'merit'. Charity given to the 'Sangha' allows the donor to attain a rebirth in the upper realms of the Celestial Realm. Therefore, charity must be practiced on a regular or daily basis.

2. Preparation for the Journey into the Hereafter by Observing the Precepts

One can make 'merit' by observing the Precepts, which needs to be meticulously observed daily. In this context, we will pay attention to the Five Precepts, which form the basis of human decency. Therefore, it is imperative that all human beings observe these five Precepts.

The Precepts are instrumental in purifying one's deeds, words, and thoughts. The meticulous observation of the Precepts allows us to control our mental, verbal, and physical activities in such a way that our meditative achievement can be facilitated. Observing the Precepts makes us decent, and defines our humanity. When a human being does not observe the Precepts, his status is reduced to that of an animal.

Many individuals are of the belief that the Five Precepts have been laid down by the Lord Buddha, hence only Buddhists need to observe them. This is not true. The truth is the Five Precepts are what define us as human. They are the principles by which we must live by. They are the human norm. They were not laid down by the Lord Buddha. Rather, they were discovered by the Lord Buddha to be crucially important to our safety both in this and future existences, and were taught to us for our good.

What Makes Observing the Five Precepts the Human Norm?

The first Precept tells us not to kill any being. Since life is most precious to all humans and animals, one must not take another being's life.

The second Precept tells us not to steal. Second to our life, we all regard our material possessions as most precious. Therefore, one must not steal from others.

The third Precept tells us not to commit adultery. Next to our material possessions, what we hold dear are our spouse and children. Therefore, any sexual misconduct must not be committed against another individual's spouse and children.

The fourth Precept tells us not to lie. When individuals that care for one another deeply lie to each other, a breach of honesty can occur. As a result, love may turn into something else. Therefore, one must not lie.

The fifth Precept tells us not to consume alcohol and other addictive substances. Alcohol causes the person that consumes it to partially lose control of his mind as well as his self-control. Under the influence of alcohol and other addictive substances, one can easily transgress against other Precepts. Therefore, one must not consume any addictive substance.

When one transgresses against any of the Precepts, one can readily witness its ill consequences right here and now. Some individuals are convinced that they can drink without causing any harm to themselves. This is absolutely untrue. First of all, drinking harms the body. Under the influence, one may cause problems for the family, one may spend too much money or one may lose one's job. But the most important thing is one will be severely punished in the Hereafter. One will be pulled toward the States of Unhappiness after one dies and suffered horrifically for an unimaginably long time.

Some individuals may wonder what will happen if the entire world population observes the Five Precepts. What is more important to ask is how we can help the entire world population to observe the Five Precepts regularly? Then we can attempt to explain the outcome of such practice. For certainly there is an answer. Should the entire world population observe the Five Precepts regularly, there will first of all be peace on earth. The atmosphere and the environment will gradually improve as a result of human

decency. Human life will take on the favorable condition of the first few generations at the beginning of the earth age when human beings observe the Five Precepts as the norm. The world climate and environment will become congenial. There will be no pollution of any sort anywhere. Sources of nutritious food will occur naturally. There will be no need for any competition for food. There will be natural harmony and balance. Happiness will then be a matter of course.

Therefore, the student should endeavor to observe the Five Precepts meticulously everyday. He can then be sure to experience happiness in this life and to journey to the States of Happiness when the time finally comes for him to depart.

3. Preparation for the Journey into the Hereafter by the Practice of Meditation

The practice of meditation is considered to be the noblest of decent practices, and should be practiced by the student. Practicing meditation is the best way to gradually scrub our consciousness clean of our unwholesome attachments. It is the practice of keeping our mind quiet and still. When stillness becomes the mind, we will experience a sublime light, which is called 'Discernment', and allows us to witness for our self the reality of everything as it truly is.

The practice of meditation may appear simple, for all one needs are a few square meters of floor space, a seat cushion, and oneself. The outward preparation for meditation may be simple but keeping one's mind still and quiet is the most difficult thing for all of us to do. The reason is our mind is so used to activity. It thinks thoughts as far back as twenty or thirty years ago in some cases. It has been through hundreds and thousands of experiences. It is nearly impossible to keep one's mind quiet and still within an hour or within a day of practice.

There are at least forty different methods of meditation. Every method aims toward the same goal, which is the attainment of enlightenment. Whatever method we choose needs to be practiced correctly. The important thing is to focus the mind at the seventh base within the body cavity, which is about two fingers' breadth above the navel. The seventh base is the original dwelling of the mind. It is the pathway toward the actualization of the Dhammakaya or the Inner Buddha. This method is the most effective meditation method as re-discovered by the Most Venerable Pramonkolthepmuni (The late Abbot of the Paknam Temple). Many practitioners have reported success using this method. The student should endeavor to practice the method himself on a daily basis. With consistent practice, the student is sure to meet with some level of success.

In conclusion, the student has already learnt the ways to prepare for his journey into the Hereafter. He should endeavor to accumulate 'merit' by following the 'Ten Ways of Making Merit'. He should practice charity to remove his miserliness. He should observe the Precepts to keep his thoughts, words, and deeds wholesome and pure. He should keep his mind clear and bright with the practice of meditation. He should carry out these practices on a daily basis, since our time on earth is limited and our time of death is unknown to us. As long as we are still breathing, we should spend our time wisely by performing as many decent deeds as we can. Our accumulated 'merit' is the only means of assuring our safe journey within the States of Happiness.

1.4 Proof of the Hereafter

The reality of the Hereafter has been a subject of debate from time immemorial, yet many have believed in its existence. Since the Hereafter cannot be accessed by any physical means, its reality has been questioned. So how do we go about proving that the Hereafter exists? Advanced scientific methods have been used toward this end but have not yet met with any success.

1.4.1 Proof of the Hereafter during the Time of the Lord Buddha

Before our Bodhisattva became enlightened as the Buddha, there had been at the time in India prophets of different creeds, who taught that the Hereafter did not exist. The number of such 'Wrong View' individuals was large and they were all over India. After Enlightenment, the Lord Buddha revealed to us the truth about our continuous existence in the Hereafter. He taught that death was not final and that there were different destinations awaiting the departed ones. The Lord Buddha sent His Arahats out to spread the Teachings. As a result, the number of 'Wrong View' individuals had decreased significantly.

During our Lord Buddha's time, there was one individual that disbelieved in the existence of the Hereafter and set out to prove his belief using different methods. This individual was a king by the name of 'Payasi'. He ruled over the city of 'Setabaya' of the 'Kosala' Region. The king's grossly misguided view was finally set right by the Arahats 'Kumarakassapa', who had the gift of giving the most eloquent sermons. The Arahats also possessed the 'celestial eye' which allowed him to penetrate the truth about the Hereafter. The discourse between 'King Payasi' and the Arahats 'Kumarakassapa' is cited here as a case study.

'King Payasi' started the discourse by stating that there were no other planes of existence outside of earth, that there was no such thing as the spontaneous rising of beings, and that there was no such thing as the fruit of good and bad Kamma. The king's opening statements caused the Arahats 'Kumarakassapa' to reveal the truth to the King Payasi with his usual loving kindness and grace in the following conversation:

The Arahats: You believe that there are no other planes of existence outside of earth, that there is no such thing as the spontaneous rising of beings, nor is there any Kammic fruit. Tell me then whether the moon and the sun exist in this or other world, whether their inhabitants are human or celestial beings.

The King: The moon and the sun belong outside of earth. Their inhabitants must therefore be celestial beings.

The Arahats: You can see that your answer already contradicts your original beliefs.

The King: Even so, I have evidence that confirms my original beliefs.

The Arahats: Please cite your evidence to me then.

The King: I have reasons to believe that the States of Unhappiness do not exist. I have relatives and friends that habitually kill animals, steal from others, commit sexual misconduct, lie, speak divisive words, use offensive language, talk nonsense, are greedy, harm others, and possess all the wrong views. I know of ascetics of a particular sect. They are of the belief that individuals, who commit the Tenfold Unwholesome Course of Action, will journey to the States of Unhappiness after they die. Therefore, whenever any one of these relatives and friends of mine was on his deathbed, I would ask him to return and inform me whether they went to the States of Unhappiness. Each agreed to do as I asked, yet none of them returns to tell me anything at all about the States of Unhappiness. This proves to me that my original beliefs are correct.

The Arahāt: Let me ask you a question. If your officials catch a thief and bring him to you for judgment, you then decide to have him decapitated. After the thief's head is shaved and his hands are tied behind his back, he is taken all over the city for all to see before being taken to the gallows to be decapitated. Right at that moment, the thief asks the officials to first allow him to return to his home to say his goodbye to his family and friends before returning for his decapitation. Will your officials allow the thief to leave or will they proceed with the decapitation?

The King: Most Venerable One, the thief will most certainly be immediately decapitated.

The Arahāt: Right then, even though the thief and the officials in this case abide in the same city on the same earth plane, the thief is not granted his wish. But your friends and relatives committed grave sins and were sentenced to hell. Why should the officials of the Hell Realm allow your relatives to return and inform you of their impending punishments in hell?

The King: Be that as it may. I still have reasons to stick to my original beliefs.

The Arahāt: Let's hear them then.

The King: I have reasons to believe that the States of Happiness do not exist. Most Venerable One, I also have relatives and friends that abstain from killing, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from lying, from speaking divisive words, from using foul language, from talking nonsense. They are not greedy and they do not harm others. In fact, they possess the right view. I have heard that ascetics of a particular sect believe the Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action will cause the departed ones to journey to the States of Happiness. Therefore, whenever any of these relatives and friends of mine was on his deathbed, I would ask him to come back and report to me that they have indeed gone to the States of Happiness. They all agreed to do so, yet none has returned nor has sent anyone to report back to me about the existence of the States of Happiness.

The Arahāt: Please allow me to use an analogy. Suppose a man fell into a pit filled with feces up to his head. You see this man and feel such pity for him that you have him washed and scrubbed especially well by your servants. You have him groomed and shaved. You then have him covered from head to toes with scented talcum powder and your servants sprinkle perfumed oil all over him. Furthermore, you have him dressed in a clean, white robe and adorned with precious jewels and assign him a

luxurious accommodation on the top of your mansion. In other words, his five senses have been elaborately gratified. Now, will this man willingly agree to go into the fecal pit again?

The King: Most certainly not. It will be impossible for him to do so again.

The Arahāt: Why?

The King: Most Venerable One, it is because the pit of feces is filthy, malodorous, and disgusting. Why would he ever want to be immersed in it ever again?

The Arahāt: This analogy gives a clear demonstration that all human beings are unclean, malodorous, and disgusting. To celestial beings, the stench of human beings could be smelled as far as 160 kilometers away. In the same manner, all your relatives and friends that obtained a rebirth in the Celestial Realm would never want to return to visit you. For these reasons, it behooves you to believe that the Hereafter exists, spontaneous rising of beings exists, and the fruit of Kamma exists.

This conversation between the Arahāt ‘Kumarakassapa’ and ‘King Payasi’ gives some details about the journey into the States of Happiness and Unhappiness. There is a great deal more detail regarding the Hereafter that can be found in the ‘Payasirajanya Sutta’ of the Tripitaka.

The above conversation allows us to conclude that we cannot prove the existence of the Hereafter by using our thoughts or by postulating a theory and finding the ways to prove the theory. Although the Arahāt’s analogies of some aspects of the Hereafter are vivid enough, we cannot be fully confident about its existence unless there is a way that we can prove it to our self. To answer the question about the existence of the Hereafter fully, clearly, and without any shred of doubt, we need to study the Lord Buddha’s Teachings on the subject.

1.4.2 Proof of the Hereafter Using the Lord Buddha’s Methods

Buddhism is based on the knowledge attained through the Lord Buddha’s Enlightenment. The Lord Buddha’s Teachings contain the whole truth about the reality of life. Therefore, Buddhism is the religion of truth. The Lord Buddha taught His enlightened Truth to the world so that we can learn the truth about our existence, about the Law of Kamma, etc. He taught us that we reaped what we sowed. When we perform good deeds, we shall receive beneficial consequences. However, when we commit indecent deeds, we shall receive ill consequences. When we accumulate good deeds, we are also accumulating ‘merit’. When we accumulate misdeeds, we incur sin. The Lord Buddha revealed to us the iron rules that governed our existence and how our life was dictated by our overall Kamma. He taught us how we perpetuated our own endless round of rebirth through our own accumulated deeds.

There are two main methods to prove the existence of the Hereafter: 1) To prove it in life; 2) To prove it in death. It is hoped that the student will choose the first method. If this is the case, the student needs to study the method in depth while he is still living.

In so doing, he will automatically be enthusiastic about accumulating only decent deeds.

The Lord Buddha discovered the method of proof and practiced it until He became enlightened. As a result, He knew the comings and goings of all beings, he knew the modes of their birth and their involvement in the round of rebirth. We will now have the opportunity to study how the Lord Buddha discovered the truth about life in the Hereafter and where we go after death.

The Lord Buddha's method of proof was through meditation. On the night of His Enlightenment, He sat in a half-lotus position underneath the Bodhi tree. He first allowed His mind to become perfectly still until He witnessed a light from within that surpassed all the brightness. He allowed His mind to flow with the Dhamma current until He attained the Threefold Knowledge which consists of:

- 1. Pubbenivasanussatinan** is supernormal knowledge that enables one to recall one's past existences from one, two, ten, one hundred, one thousand to countless existences.
- 2. Cutupapatanan** is supernormal vision that can visualize the death and rebirth of other beings as well as their Kammic causes and consequences.
- 3. Asavakkhayanana** is supernormal knowledge that leads to the cessation of all mental intoxication.

Of the Threefold Knowledge, it is the Cutupapatanan that reveals the existence of the Hereafter and the rising of beings in these planes of existence. This supernormal faculty is also called the 'celestial eye' as was recorded in the 'Devadut Sutta'.

Since the Lord Buddha discovered the truth about the Hereafter, during the time of the Lord Buddha, there was a great many individuals who could prove and confirm the existence of the Hereafter after the manner of the Lord Buddha. Among these individuals stood two prominent figures, the first is the Most Venerable Anuruddha. He was the most gifted of the Lord Buddha's disciples in the area of 'celestial eye', and was fond of following the comings and goings of beings in the various planes of existence. Another prominent individual is the Lord Buddha's Chief Disciple, the Most Venerable Mahamokkalana. He was fond of physically visiting celestial beings in the Celestial Realm. He enjoyed conversing with certain celestial beings about their previous Kamma, which endowed them with stupendous celestial wealth. Often times, he would recount these stories in his sermons to lay individuals in the presence of the Lord Buddha. The 'celestial eye' possessed by these two eminent disciples was a result of their meditative attainments.

Now that the student has learnt about the method of proof concerning the reality of the Hereafter as provided for us by the Lord Buddha, he should hasten to diligently practice meditation until he can achieve meditative attainments after the manner of the Lord Buddha and His eminent disciples. Achieving such attainments may be difficult but not impossible. All one needs to do is to practice regularly, diligently, and correctly. Sooner or later, one will meet with success. At the very least, the student needs to achieve the meditative state of a calm mind. In this way, he can be confident that he will spend his Hereafter in the States of Happiness.



Preparing before Going to the Hereafter



Clearness of Mind

1.5 Benefits That Can Be Derived from Studying the Hereafter

The Lord Buddha compared our life to a dew-drop at the tip of a glass blade, to a bubble or an abscess that came to being quickly and disappeared quickly. He compared our life to the writing on the water surface. Our life can be compared to water that flows downward from a cliff and does not flow back upward. It is like spit. It is like a piece of meat on a hot iron grill over a hot fire, which burns to cinder quickly. It is like a head of cattle waiting in line in a slaughterhouse where death is fast approaching. In other words, our life lasts but a short while.

A wise individual knows to consider his life with discernment and realizes the human form does not last long. On December 26, 2004 when the Tsunami wave caused by an earthquake in Sumatra hit the shorelines, many vacationers in the affected areas never dreamt that they would encounter such a disaster. Yet, more than one hundred thousand lives were lost in that disaster alone. Therefore, nothing in life is certain. Death never stops to consider if one is a child, a teenager, a young adult, a mature adult, or an elderly person. Therefore, it behooves us not to be careless.

If nothing else, this course should help us to understand how rare it truly is to be born human. Our time on earth does not last as long as beings in the Celestial or the Hell Realms. Therefore, now is the time to accumulate our merit. The fruit of our good deeds will shed its blessings in our hereafter. Studying the Hereafter allows us to gain a clear understanding about other planes of existence. Although we cannot physically witness these planes of existence, our firm belief in their existence will for certain affect our thoughts, our words, and our deeds. Certain phenomena on earth exist even though they are not visible to our naked eyes. For example, we cannot see the air which we breathe in and out all the time. We have no idea what it looks like and what shape it takes. Yet, should one day we no longer breathe in the air, we will surely die.

The main objective of this course is to help build a peaceful world by starting first with the student. This can only work if after having learnt the truth about our existence, the student can change his life in accordance with the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Once he has found the Teachings to work for him, he can then help to spread the knowledge to those around him and help them to lead a more meaningful and happier life.

CHAPTER 2

THE UNFORTUNATE REALMS

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF THE UNFORTUNATE REALMS

2.1 The Hell Realm

- 2.1.1 The Hell of Mahanarok
- 2.1.2 The Hell of Ussadanarok (the Satellite Sites)
- 2.1.3 The Hell of Yomalok
- 2.1.4 The Hell of Logantanarok (the Special Site)

2.2 The Peta Realm

- 2.2.1 The Meaning of the Peta Realm
- 2.2.2 Location of the Peta Realm and the Types of Peta
- 2.2.3 Types of Petas
- 2.2.4 Details of the Twelve Families of Petas
- 2.2.5 Case Studies Involving Petas
- 2.2.6 Petas That Can Receive Merit
- 2.2.7 The Cause of Rebirth as a Peta

2.3 The Asurakaya Realm

- 2.3.1 Location of the Asurakaya Realm
- 2.3.2 Existence Condition of the Asurakayas
- 2.3.3 The Causes of Rebirth as an Asurakaya
- 2.3.4 The Differences between Petas and Asurakayas

2.4 The Animal Realm

- 2.4.1 Location of the Animal Realm
- 2.4.2 Existence Condition of Animals
- 2.4.3 Types of Animals
- 2.4.4 The Causes of Rebirth as an Animal

CONCEPTS

1. The Hell Realm is the first plane of the Unfortunate realm. It is a place that is devoid of all happiness and comforts. A rebirth in the Hell Realm takes place as a result of a being's habitual misdeeds. Once in the Hell Realm, the Hell being will suffer the most horrifying pain and suffering through continuous and horrific forms of punishment. The Hell Realm is situated underneath 'Mount Trigut'. It consists of eight major sites which are the Hell of 'Mahanarok', 128 satellite sites which are called the Hell of 'Ussadanarok' and 320 minor sites which are called the Hell of 'Yomalok'. Once a hell being has gone through all the forms of punishment in the Hell of Mahanarok', it has to go through additional forms of punishment in the Hells of 'Ussadanarok' and 'Yomalok' until it has served the full sentence of its previous misdeeds as dictated by the Law of Karma.

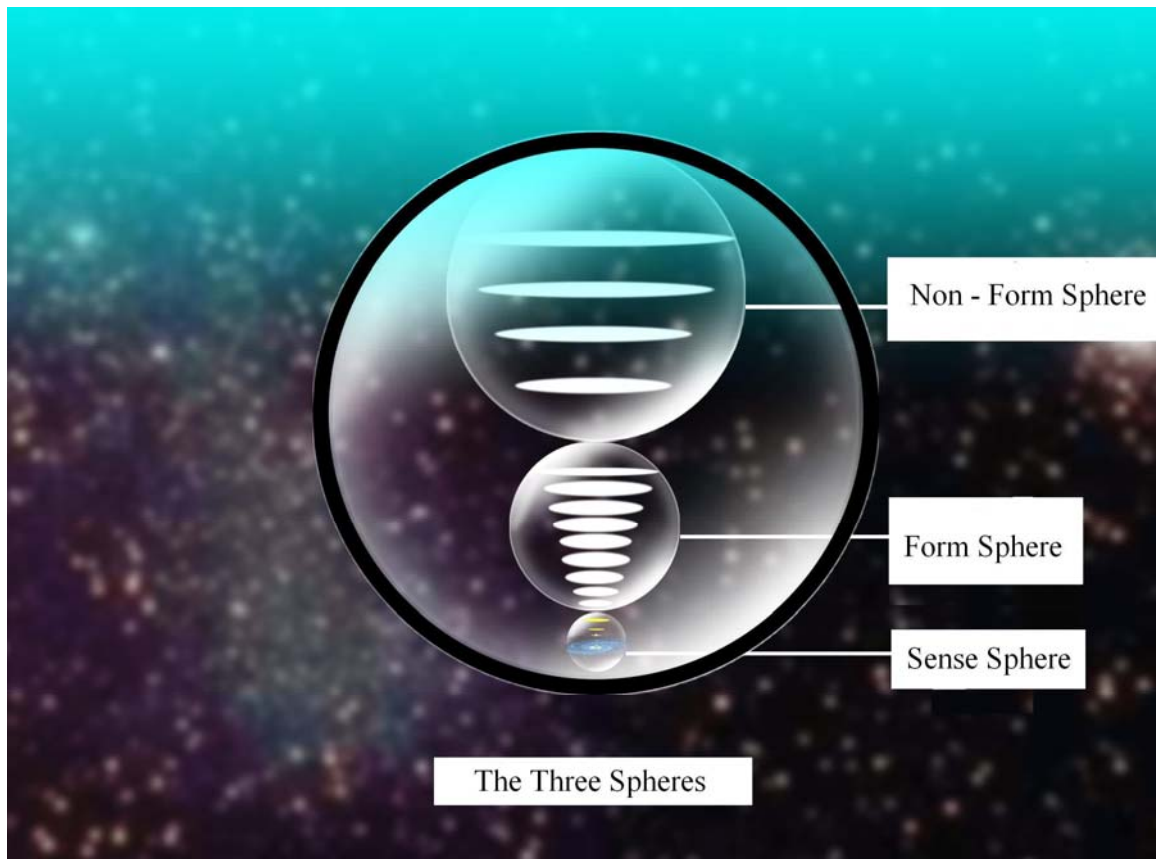
2. The Peta Realm is the second plane of the Unfortunate realm. It is a place that is filled with trouble, severe hunger, and severe thirst. Petas can be categorized into twelve families. They dwell in the gorges of 'Mount Trigut' as well as in a plane of existence parallel to earth. A rebirth in the Peta Realm is caused by the unwholesome deeds of parsimony. A rebirth in the Peta Realm occurs via two routes. The first route is after a being has already gone through the forms of punishment in the Hells of 'Mahanarok', 'Ussadanarok', and 'Yomalok'. And the second route is immediately after the human existence.

3. The Asurakaya Realm is the third plane of the Unfortunate realm. It is a place that is devoid of joy. Asurakayas and Petas are very similar and it is difficult to differentiate them at times. Asurakayas dwell in the same location as Petas in the gorges of 'Mount Trigut'. They possess bizarre forms. They may have a pig head with a human body, for example. Their existence is marked by severe hardship not unlike that of Petas. They live in constant thirst and hunger but the thirst is more prominent. A rebirth as an Asurakaya is caused by deeds of greed and covetousness.

4. The Animal Realm is the fourth and last plane of the Unfortunate realm. Animals suffer less than hell beings, Petas, and Asurakayas. They possess a body which parallels the ground, and are not capable of attaining Nibbana. They share the earth with human beings. They may have no feet. They may have two, four or more feet.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the condition of existence, and the location of each site of the Hell Realm.
2. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the location, the types, and the cause of a rebirth as a Peta.
3. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the location, the condition, and the cause of a rebirth as an Asurakaya.
4. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the location, the types, the condition of existence, and the cause of a rebirth as an animal.



THE UNFORTUNATE REALMS

Introduction

Life in Samsara is fraught with danger. Should we be born and raised in an environment that is not conducive to the performance of good deeds, we may make the mistake of committing indecent deeds because we lack a true friend or ‘kalayanamit’ to help point us in the right direction. When we die, the strength of our bad Kamma will propel us to have a rebirth in the Unfortunate realm.

Unfortunate realms are the planes of existence in the Hereafter, which are devoid of happiness and are full of horrifying pain and suffering from the terrible heat of the hellfire, and from the various forms of punishment. The forms of punishment are innumerable and uniquely different depending on the hell being’s misdeeds. They cause the hell being to undergo horrific pain and suffering.

Individuals in life that have not bothered to perform any decent deed but habitually commit misdeeds, on their deathbed, the sights and sound of their misdeeds would appear to them for their private viewing. These moving images cause their minds to become gloomy and remorseful. **After they die, they will journey to the Unfortunate realm** as stated by the Lord Buddha in the ‘**Palabundit Sutta**’.

The Sutta teaches how one’s misdeeds committed through one’s physical, verbal, and mental means propels one to journey into the Unfortunate realm. Moreover, there are four more states of unhappy existence that can be explained further as follows:

The Unfortunate realms (the State of Loss and Woe) denote the planes of existence where their inhabitants have no opportunity to perform any good deed due to the uncivilized condition of their environment. They are places of condemnation where even the slightest happiness cannot be experienced but there is only suffering, hence un-conducive to the performance of any good deed.

The Places of Unhappiness are places of suffering. They are the states of existence brought about by one’s own indecent deeds during one’s human existence. They are places of punishment.

The Place of Suffering is the dwelling place of beings that have committed misdeeds. It is a place devoid of influence and power. It is a place where its inhabitants are facing terrible injury with their entrails bursting apart and scattering all over. It is a place of horror.

Hell is an uncivilized destination that is completely devoid of pleasure. There are only fear and horror at all times. None of its inhabitants wants to be in it.

These states of existence share similar characteristics in that they are places of harm, suffering, torture. They are completely devoid of civilization. They however differ in terms of how their inhabitants obtain their happiness and suffering. For example, the Animal Realm is considered a part of the Unfortunate realm but they are some types of animals like the Garuda, the Naga, that are not considered as part of the Unfortunate realm. The reason is these animals are enjoying the fruit of their merit in the first plane of the Celestial Realm which is called 'Jatumaharajika'. It is considered an uncivilized place because its inhabitants cannot attain Nibbana. It is not a place of suffering because its inhabitants are not being harmed.

It can be concluded that the unfortunate realms are places where beings undergo punishment as a result of the misdeeds committed during their human existence. It is a fact that no one can escape the Law of Kamma regardless of his nationality, creed or race.

In this chapter the student will learn about the location of each realm of existence, and the type of behavior that determines one's rebirth in that particular realm. The student will also learn about the condition of existence in each of the realms in the States of Unhappiness, which include the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Animal Realm. At the end of the chapter, the student will gain a better understanding of the details of each realm.

2.1 The Hell Realm

The Hell Realm or Niriya Realm is devoid of comforts and belongs to the States of Unhappiness. It is a place where its inhabitants undergo the most severe forms of punishment and for the longest duration. It is a realm of total suffering. Any being destined for this realm of existence will receive only pain and suffering. The Hell Realm is extremely vast and is divided into 'sites' of different sizes. The beings of each site will receive different forms of punishment depending on their previous misdeeds. The Hell Realm can be divided into three major parts, which include the Hell of 'Mahanarok', the Hell of 'Ussadanarok', and the Hell of 'Yomalok'.

The student will first learn about the Hell Realm in detail and the type of behavior that causes an individual to obtain a rebirth in each of the sites of the Hell Realm. The knowledge will cause the student to exercise care in regards to his conduct in the present existence and make sure that he will not take the risk of spending his 'Hereafter' in any of these sites.

2.1.1 The Hell of 'Mahanarok'

The majority of individuals on earth including the current Buddhists do not have a good understanding about the Hell of 'Mahanarok' or 'Major Hells'. Some have seen drawings on the temple walls illustrating certain scenes of punishment such as the climbing of a red cotton tree with sharp, protruding thorns. Other drawings illustrate some forms of torture in a huge hot pan or the infliction of punishment upon the hell beings by celestial officials. Most of these drawings represent a few forms of

punishment carried out in the minor sites of the Hell of ‘Yomalok’ but do not represent the rest of the Hell Realm.

A human being’s misdeeds carried out physically, verbally, and mentally on a regular basis are what cause him to obtain a rebirth in the Hell of ‘Mahanarok’. On his deathbed, the images of these misdeeds will appear to him causing him to experience a very dark Kamma-Emotion. Upon his death, his refined physical form will be immediately pulled toward the site of his destination in the Hell of Mahanarok as determined by his particular form of misdeeds.

a. The Meaning of ‘Mahanarok’.

The word ‘Mahanarok’ means **the great hell. It is the largest realm of the States of Unhappiness and the most horrific forms of punishment are carried out within the respective sites of ‘Mahanarok’.**

b. Location of the Hell of ‘Mahanarok’.

The Hell Realm is not situated deep under the ground as being widely understood. The Hell of ‘Mahanarok’ is located beneath the ‘Great Mount Sineru’, which in turn sits on ‘Mount Trigut’. The different sites of ‘Mahanarok’ are located underneath ‘Mount Trigut’. They are arranged in an orderly fashion one site beneath another in the great vastness of space from the first and smallest site to the eighth and largest site as follows:

The First Site of ‘Mahanarok’ is called ‘Sanjiva’.

The Second Site of ‘Mahanarok’ is called ‘Kalasutta’.

The Third Site of ‘Mahanarok’ is called ‘Sanghata’.

The Fourth Site of ‘Mahanarok’ is called ‘Roruva’.

The Fifth Site of ‘Mahanarok’ is called ‘Maharoruva’.

The Sixth Site of ‘Mahanarok’ is called ‘Tapanā’.

The Seventh Site of ‘Mahanarok’ is called ‘Mahatapanā’.

The Eighth Site of ‘Mahanarok’ is called ‘Aveci’.

c. The General Environment of the Hell of ‘Mahanarok’.

‘Mahanarok’ is a place filled with intense heat, gloominess, and darkness. The hellfire in ‘Mahanarok’ is completely black and its heat is much more intense than that in the Hells of ‘Ussadanarok’ and ‘Yomalok’. It is tens of millions of times more intense than any fire on earth. Severe forms of punishment are inflicted on the hell beings by the

hell denizens that come into being through the power of the hell being's misdeeds. The sole purpose of their existence is to torture the hell being relentlessly and ceaselessly.

d. The Type of Misdeeds That Brings about a Rebirth in the Particular Site of the Hell of 'Mahanarok'.

What determines one's rebirth in 'Mahanarok' is the habitual transgression against each of the Precepts, habitual indulgence in gambling activities, the crimes of matricide and patricide.

A rebirth in the First Site is determined by the violation of the First Precept, which includes habitual killing.

A rebirth in the Second Site is determined by the violation of the Second Precept, which includes habitual stealing.

A rebirth in the Third Site is determined by the violation of the Third Precept, which includes sexual misconduct.

A rebirth in the Fourth Site is determined by the violation of the Fourth Precept, which includes lying, using offensive language, making divisive speech, and making nonsensical remarks.

A rebirth in the Fifth Site is determined by the violation of the Fifth Precept, which includes the habitual consumption of addictive substances such as alcohol.

A rebirth in the Sixth Site is determined by the habitual involvement in the 'Causes of Ruin' such as gambling.

A rebirth in the Seventh Site is determined by the habitual transgression against all five Precepts as well as compulsive gambling.

A rebirth in the Eighth Site is determined by such grave misdeeds as patricide, matricide, killing an Arahant, causing the 'Sangha' (Buddhist monks) to divide, and causing the Lord Buddha to sustain a bruise.

In reality, we have all committed many misdeeds under different circumstances in each one of our existences. What determines someone to have a rebirth in any of the sites of 'Mahanarok' is a particular type of habitual misdeed. For example, to have a rebirth in the Fifth Site, the individual must have drunk and/or consumed addictive substances on a regular basis. While under the influence, he might have violated other Precepts as well. Suppose an individual drinks on a regular basis, his sentence can include horrific forms of punishment that last for an entire Buddha Eon¹. He will first be force-fed scalding black acid until his sentence for habitual drinking in the Fifth Site of Mahanarok is served. Should he commit additional types of misdeeds such as killing, he will then suffer the next phase of punishment for the crime of killing. In this case, he will be unceremoniously cut up into small pieces until he dies over and over again

¹ A Buddha Eon is the great expanse of time between the happening of one Buddha and another.

until the sentence is served. Where there is a combination of misdeeds, the new forms of punishment may take place in the original site or in a different site altogether. The form and site of punishment all depends on the gravity, the type and frequency of the misdeeds.

e. The Pain and Suffering of the Hell of ‘Mahanarok’.

Pain and suffering is a universal phenomenon. It is a part of us all because we are not yet devoid of ‘unwholesome attachments’. However, the pain and suffering of ‘Mahanarok’ is something to be avoided at all cost. The reason is in ‘Mahanarok’, one is ceaselessly and relentlessly tortured. At the very first second of one’s rebirth in ‘Mahanarok’, the hell denizens that rise spontaneously through one’s power of misdeeds will execute the punishment immediately. It is the most horrific experience as told by the Lord Buddha to the monks in the ‘**Palabundit Sutta**’. The Lord Buddha said that:

It was not easy to find an analogy that would adequately describe the suffering of hell.

One of the monks did request the Lord Buddha to describe the suffering of hell by using an analogy.

The Lord Buddha graciously obliged by citing one example of a criminal that had been sentenced by the king to have his body pierced with 100 spears. In the same day at noon, the criminal was checked for vital signs. If he was still alive, he was to be pierced with 100 additional spears. When the evening came, if the criminal was still alive, he would be pierced with 100 more spears. The Lord Buddha used the analogy of the pain a criminal had to undergo as a result of having been pierced by 300 spears.

The monks commented to the Lord Buddha that being pierced by just one spear would already be painful enough left alone 300 spears. The Lord Buddha answered that:

However horrific the pain might be in this case, it still could not even begin to be compared with the pain and suffering of ‘Mahanarok’. The reason was in reality the pain and suffering a hell being had to endure in ‘Mahanarok’ was a hundred-, a thousand-fold more intense. He furthered explained that the amount of pain and suffering from being pierced with 300 spears was the size of a pebble but the pain and suffering in ‘Mahanarok’ was as great as the Great Mount Sineru.

From the Lord Buddha's statements, we can catch a glimpse of the horrific suffering and torment in the Hell Realm, the level of which cannot be compared with anything we have to endure on earth. Therefore, it behooves us not to do anything that might cause us to be at risk and suffer the horrific punishment of 'Mahanarok'.

f. Details of Each of the Mahanarok Sites.

The student will now learn about the eight sites of 'Mahanarok'. They are as follows:

The First Site: Sanjiva Mahanarok

The words 'Sanjiva Mahanarok' mean Mahanarok that never dies. Sanjiva Mahanarok is the first and smallest of the Mahanarok sites and is situated beneath 'Mount Trigut'.

The Cause of Rebirth in 'Sanjiva Mahanarok': The major cause comes from the evil Kamma of 'killing'.

Duration: Existence in 'Sanjiva Mahanarok' lasts 500 Hell Years. When compared to the time on earth, each Hell Day is equal to 9 million earth years. Therefore, 500 Hell Years are equal to 1,620,000 million earth years.

Condition of Existence in 'Sanjiva Mahanarok': A rebirth in this site means an existence of horrific pain and suffering. For example, as soon as the rebirth takes place, the new arrival to this site will be seized and bound by the hell denizens. It will then be forced to lie down on a red hot iron sheet heated by the hellfire. After which a denizen will hack its body into pieces with a sharp sword. Or the hell denizens will graze the hell being's flesh with a sharp implement or slice the flesh off the bones until only bare bones are left. After the hell being expires, there will appear a Kammic Breath that sweeps through the body parts causing them to reform and the hell being returns to life. Alas, it becomes alive only to suffer the same horrific form of punishment all over again. The hell being will suffer this cycle of torments for the duration of its existence.

The Second Site: Kalasutta Mahanarok

The words 'Kalasutta Mahanarok' mean Mahanarok of black threads. 'Kalasutta Mahanarok' is situated beneath 'Sanjiva Mahanarok'. It is also larger than 'Sanjiva Mahanarok'.

The Cause of Rebirth in 'Kalasutta Mahanarok': The major cause comes from the evil Kamma of stealing.

Duration: Existence in 'Kalasutta Mahanarok' lasts 1,000 Hell Years. Each day and night in this site is equal to 36 million earth years. Therefore, 1,000 Hell Years in this site are equal to 12,960,000 million earth years.

Condition of Existence in 'Kalasutta Mahanarok': A new arrival of this site will be seized and bound by the hell denizens. It will then be forced to lie down on a red hot

iron sheet heated by the hellfire. The denizens will take a black thread that is made of hell iron the size of a palm tree and beat the hell being of gigantic size until its body is full of lash-marks. The denizens will subsequently use a red, hot saw to cut along the lash marks until the hell being's body is cut into pieces. In the meantime, the hell being will struggle with all of its might until it becomes loose. The denizens will seize it and bind it even more tightly this time before they continue with the horrific punishment. The hell being will suffer this cycle of punishment for the duration of its existence.

The Third Site: Sanghata Mahanarok

The words 'Sanghata Mahanarok' mean Mahanarok in which the body is crushed by an iron mountain. It lies beneath 'Kalasutta Mahanarok' and is larger than 'Kalasutta Mahanarok'.

The Cause of Rebirth in 'Sanghata Mahanarok': The major cause is the evil Kamma of sexual misconduct.

Duration: Existence in this site lasts 2,000 Hell Years. Each day and night in this site is equal to 144 million earth years. Therefore, 2,000 Hell Years are equal to 103,680,000 million earth years.

Condition of Existence in 'Sanghata Mahanarok': Beings in this site have bizarre and misshapen appearances. For example, some beings have a buffalo head but a human body. Some beings have a human head and a buffalo body. Some beings have a dog, pig, duck, or chicken head with a human body. The multifarious forms are too great to describe them all. As soon as the rebirth takes place, the hell denizens carrying fearsome looking weapons will chase after the hell beings while shouting such threatening words as 'I am going to kill you'. This forces the hell being to run for his life but due to his power of misdeeds his path will be obstructed by a huge fire. When he turns around to run back his path will be obstructed by another huge fire. Whichever way he turns, he will be faced with a huge fire. Finally, his body will be severely burnt by the hellfire. As he is suffering tremendously from severe burns, there appears two iron mountains rolling toward him and other hell beings in the path and crushing them to death.

The Fourth Site: Roruva Mahanarok

The words 'Roruva Mahanarok' mean Mahanarok that is filled with pitiful wailing. It is situated beneath 'Sanghata Mahanarok' and is larger than 'Sanghata Mahanarok'.

The Cause of Rebirth in 'Roruva Mahanarok': The major cause comes from the evil Kamma of one's false words.

Duration: Existence in this site lasts 4,000 Hell Years. Each day and night in this site is equal to 576 million earth years. Therefore, 4,000 Hell Years are equal to 829,440,000 million earth years.

Condition of Existence in ‘Roruva Mahanarok’: The hell beings of this site serve their sentence in an iron lotus in a highly unusual position. Each hell being must lie face down in the middle of a gigantic iron lotus. Its face is buried into the lotus. Its feet are buried into the lotus up to its ankles. Its arms spread out with its hands buried into the lotus up to its wrists. It has to lie in this unusual position until a hellfire appears. The hellfire will then burn the iron lotus as well as the hell being. The flame will go in through its left ear and out the right ear, then in through the right ear and out the left ear. The flame will also go in through its mouth, its eyes, and its nose at the same time causing the hell being to wail loudly due to its excruciating pain. The hell being does not die but continue to suffer in this manner for the duration of its existence.

The Fifth Site: Maharoruva Mahanarok

The words ‘Maharoruva Mahanarok’ mean Mahanarok that is filled with great wailing. It is situated beneath ‘Roruva Mahanarok’ and is larger than ‘Roruva Mahanarok’.

The Cause of Rebirth in ‘Maharoruva Mahanarok’: The major cause comes from the evil Kamma of substance abuse.

Duration: Existence in this site lasts 8,000 Hell Years. Each day and night in this site equals 2,304 millions earth years. Therefore, 8,000 Hell Years are equal to 6,635,520,000 millions earth years.

Condition of Existence in ‘Maharoruva Mahanarok’: The hell beings of this site must stand in the iron lotus with burning, corrosive petals. The iron lotus is perpetually aflame with red hellfire and burns the hell being from head to toes. The flames go in through the nine openings of its body burning the hell being from the inside as well. The hell being suffers most horrifically and wails loudly due to its excruciating pain. In addition, it is beaten by the hell denizens with iron clubs that are also aflame with the hellfire until its head is completely crushed. Yet, it does not die. By the power of its evil deeds, it will suffer most horrifically in this manner for the duration of its existence.

The Sixth Site: Tapana Mahanarok

The words ‘Tapana Mahanarok’ mean Mahanarok that causes the hell beings to suffer penetrating heat. It is situated beneath ‘Maharoruva Mahanarok’ and is larger than ‘Maharoruva Mahanarok’.

The Cause of Rebirth in ‘Tapana Mahanarok’: The major cause comes from the evil Kamma of engaging in gambling activities.

Duration: Existence in this site lasts 16,000 Hell Years. Each day and night in this site is equal to 9,216 millions earth years. Therefore, 16,000 Hell Years are equal to 53,084,160,000 millions earth years.

Condition of Existence in ‘Tapana Mahanarok’: The hell beings of this site will be forced by the hell denizens to climb up an iron stake the size of a palm tree that is red hot with flames. After they climb up to the very top, the hell denizens will grab their bodies and pierce them through with a sharp stake like putting pieces of meat on a skewer. They will then be burnt by the hellfire until their flesh and skin suffer severe burns. When the time is just right, there will appear hell dogs with a bizarre shape the size of an elephant, howling with hunger and thirst. They will run toward the burnt hell beings and snatch them from the stake and gnaw at them until only the bones are left. Once the hell beings come back to life, they will undergo the same cycle of horrific suffering again. This cycle of event will take place for the duration of their existence.

The Seventh Site: Mahatapana Mahanarok

The words ‘Mahatapana Mahanarok’ mean Mahanarok that is filled with great penetrating heat. This site is situated beneath ‘Tapana Mahanarok’ and is larger than ‘Tapana Mahanarok’.

The Cause of Rebirth in ‘Mahatapana Mahanarok’: The major causes come from the violation of the Precepts and habitual involvement with the ‘Causes of Ruin’.

Duration: Existence in this site lasts about one-half ‘Antarakappa’¹.

Condition of Existence in ‘Mahatapana Mahanarok’: The hell beings in this site exist in a wide and deep area surrounded by iron walls aflame with hellfire. Within this huge area, there contains iron mountains aflame with hellfire. The areas surrounding each mountain are filled with barbed wire and sharp spikes. The floor was made of fiery red, hot iron. All the hell denizens carry weapons such as spears, swords, lances, etc. The weapons are aflame with hellfire. They chase after and injure the hell beings with their weapons. They chase the hell beings up the fiery red, hot mountains. Once the hell beings reach the mountain peak, there will blow an acid gale wind with the most intense heat that causes the hell beings to fall off the mountain peak onto the red, hot barbed wire and sharp spikes. Their blood spurts out all over the floor. Some hell beings are crushed from their left side to their right side after they fall off the mountain peak. The hell beings will undergo this cycle of tortures for the duration of their existence.

The Eighth Site: Aveci Mahanarok

The words ‘Aveci Mahanarok’ mean Mahanarok that is devoid of any waves. That is, it is a place devoid of any troughs and peaks, which means there is a constant level of excruciating pain and suffering. ‘Aveci Mahanarok’ is the last and largest site of the Hell of ‘Mahanarok’. It is the site where the most severe forms of punishment take place and the duration of existence is the longest.

¹ One Antarakappa is an unimaginably long period of time starting from the time when human beings’ lifespan is one Asongki Year and gradually reduces to ten years, then increases again to one Asongki Year. One Asongki Year is equal to 1 followed by 140 zeros years.

The Cause of Rebirth in ‘Aveci Mahanarok’: The cause comes from one or more of the most evil Kamma of patricide, matricide, killing an Arahant, causing the Lord Buddha to sustain a bruise, causing division among the ‘Sangha’ or Buddhist monks.

Duration: Existence in this site lasts about one Antarakappa.

Condition of Existence in ‘Aveci Mahanarok’: The hell beings of this site suffer most horrifically. It is the largest ‘Mahanarok’ site and looks like a huge city surrounded by iron walls aflame with hellfire. Inside the walls, hellfire is constantly burning its inhabitants. There is no respite. Unfortunately, the number and the frequency of rebirth in ‘Aveci Mahanarok’ is the greatest of all the sites in the Hell Realm. Therefore, the density of population here is the highest. The hell beings in this site are all crowded together. They have to endure their horrific forms of punishment in a standing, walking, or lying down position depending on their particular posture when they committed their evil Kamma during their human existence.

Comparison of the Lifespan of Hell Beings to That of Human Beings

Mahanarok (or Great Hell)	Lifespan (in Hell Years)	One Day in Hell (in Millions Earth Years)	Lifespan (in Millions Earth Years)
1 st Site: Sanchiva Mahanarok	500	9	1,620,000
2 nd Site: Kalasutta Mahanarok	1,000	36	12,960,000
3 rd Site: Sankata Mahanarok	2,000	144	103,680,000
4 th Site: Roruva Mahanarok	4,000	576	829,440,000
5 th Site: Maharoruva Mahanarok	8,000	2,304	6,635,520,000
6 th Site: Tavana Mahanarok	16,000	9,216	53,084,160,000
7 th Site: Mahatapana Mahanarok	Approximately half a sub-eon or ½ Antarakappa		
8 th Site: Aveci Mahanarok	Approximately one sub-eon or 1 Antarakappa		

Case Studies Concerning Mahanarok as Appeared in the Inner Dreams Kindergarten.

Forms of Punishment in the First Site

A Pig Butcher (Aired on October 21, 2002)

Anyone that kills every day or regularly regardless of the quantity killed is destined for Mahanarok. Before his death, his Kamma-Vision will be that of the pigs that he has slaughtered. It is as if they are coming to ask for their lives back. He will subsequently view the scenes of his butchering, which cause his mind to become gloomy with remorse. The Sin Sphere at the center of his being will appear and enlarge itself until it completely blots out the Dhamma Sphere. The Dhamma Sphere is responsible for the existence of his coarse human form. At this point, the refined physical form is severed from the coarse human form. The Sin Sphere then enters the center of the refined physical form and continues to enlarge itself. As it grows bigger, there begins the appearance of the hell being form at its center. As the detached refined physical form moves toward the bases of the coarse human form until it reaches the first base, it will leave the coarse human form altogether. If the number of pigs killed is small, the rebirth will take place in Sanchiva Mahanarok or Kalasutta Mahanarok or Sanghata Mahanarok or Roruva Mahanarok. If the number of pigs that have been butchered is higher, the rebirth will take place in Maharoruva Mahanarok. If the number of pigs that have been butchered is for nationwide or worldwide distribution, the rebirth will take place in 'Aveci Mahanarok'. The hell being's size will be small, relatively speaking, if it rises spontaneously in 'Roruva Mahanarok'. Its size will be larger if it rises spontaneously in 'Maharoruva Mahanarok'. If it rises spontaneously in 'Aveci Mahanarok', its size will be gigantic. The hell being will assume its appearance and size immediately upon its rising in a particular site. The Sin Sphere within the hell being will manifest menacing hell denizens that become its evil Kammic partners. The sole purpose of their existence is to inflict all forms of horrific punishment upon the hell being. The hellfire in 'Mahanarok' appears pitch black and its heat is more violently intense than that in 'Ussadanarok' and 'Yomalok'.

When hell beings spontaneously rise in 'Mahanarok', they will assume multifarious shapes. Some have a pig head with a human body. Some have a pig body with a human head. Some have pig hands and feet with a human body and a pig head, etc.

When a hell being is killed, it will be killed in all manners of cruelty causing it to suffer most excruciatingly. On earth, when a human being is killed, he will suffer for a time period only. This time period becomes 10,000-fold in 'Roruva Mahanarok'. It becomes 100,000-fold in 'Maharoruva Mahanarok' and one million-fold in 'Aveci Mahanarok'.

The killing of a hell being is carried out in different ways. In 'Maharoruva Mahanarok', the process is crueler and more violent than that in 'Roruva Mahanarok'. For example, some hell beings may be pierced with a sharp stake and roasted over the most intensive hellfire. Others are cut up in small pieces beginning with their fingers and advancing to other parts of the body. They feel the most excruciating pain of all the severed and remaining parts until they die when their heads are chopped through.

Some hell beings have their hands and feet bound before being slit at the throat. Some are held to the floor and their flesh is sliced off piece by piece while they are still alive. Their internal organs are then removed one by one. They suffer horrifically before their death which takes place after their heads are lopped off. Some hell beings with a human or pig head are hung upside-down before their flesh is sliced off. Once they die, the Kammic Breath will blow. Their body will be reformed and they come back to life only to undergo repeated, horrific forms of punishment over and over for the entire duration of their existence.

When a hell being's sentence in 'Mahanarok' is over, it will have a rebirth in one of the satellite sites to undergo further punishment. When a human being dies, the initial destination of his refined physical form is determined by the gravity of his evil Kamma or the level of gloominess of its mind. If it is very gloomy, it will have a rebirth in one site. If it is less gloomy, it will have a rebirth in a different site. In other words, the state of one's mind just before death determines the being's next place of rebirth. The forms of punishment in the satellite sites of 'Ussadanarok' are less cruel and less violent than those in 'Mahanarok'. For example, the hell being is given the opportunity to run and hide in the forest. Some hell beings have a human head with a pig body, some vice versa. In these places leaves that fall off the trees become sharp spears and swords, which stab and wound the hell beings until they die. When they come back to life again, they find themselves running out into the open space, only to be bombarded by a rain of sharp spears and swords. Their bodies are sliced, cut, stabbed, until they are filled with wounds and die. The Kammic Breath then blows and their bodies will be reformed. They come back to life again just to suffer the same cruel fate for a long, long time to come.

When a hell being's sentence in 'Ussadanarok' is over, it will be brought to the Judgment Throne in 'Yomalok'. Here, its residual evil Kamma and whatever 'merit' it might have received from its family and friends on earth in the previous Earth Age or in the past 500 million years will be re-evaluated. If it does receive a sufficient level of 'merit' at this point, it will be able to obtain a rebirth in the Human Realm. However, if its residual evil Kamma is substantial enough, it will be subject to additional punishment in 'Yomalok'. Here, it will have brief respites from punishment such as the time periods when they are waiting in line to be chopped, stabbed, cut up and sliced or to go into a huge pan.

When the hell being's sentence in 'Yomalok' is over, its residual evil Kamma will cause it to have a rebirth as an 'Asurakaya' with a deformed and bizarre body. It may have a pig head with a human body but the head is next to its anus. It has to lap up its own excrement. Some have a pig head with four legs but from the chest up, they have a human torso with two arms. Their fingers are like swords that slice off their own flesh to feed themselves because they are filled with the utmost thirst and hunger. They will suffer terribly in this manner for a very long time.

If its residual evil Kamma dictates that it has a rebirth as a 'Peta', its body will be deformed and bizarre like the Asurakayas'. It will be bombarded with a rain of hot flames for a very long time. After the sentence as a Peta is over, it will be reborn as a pig that is raised for food. The number of times of rebirth as a pig is dictated by the number of pigs it butchered during its human existence. For each pig that it killed, the number of times it will be reborn as a pig is equal to the number of hair on that pig. This number is then multiplied by the total number of pigs that it killed. After the

round of rebirth as a pig is completed, it will then have a rebirth in the Human Realm. Should the individual ever kill a pregnant pig during his past human existence, this transgression will cause him to die in the womb. Should he ever kill a piglet, this transgression will cause him to have a short lifespan. He will die prematurely through a deadly disease or a fatal accident. Once the residual evil Kamma decreases, his lifespan will increase. For example, he may live to be ten years old before he dies from a deadly disease, a fatal accident, or from being killed. His lifespan will gradually increase as his residual evil Kamma decreases. Once he lives longer, should he commit more evil Kamma, he will return to the 'States of Unhappiness' and suffer yet another horrific cycle of crime and punishment. However, if he begins to accumulate 'merit', he can more quickly escape his residual evil Kamma. Now if during the individual's past human existence, he committed a combination of evil Kamma such as slaughtering pigs and drinking alcohol, once he serves his sentence from the evil Kamma of killing, he will have a rebirth in a different site to undergo additional punishment for the evil Kamma of drinking. If he also committed sexual misconduct, he will next be reborn in the Third Site of 'Mahanarok'. The sites and length of punishment incurred depends on the types of the accumulated evil Kamma. Therefore, what our life in the 'Hereafter' will be like is determined by our overall Kamma or deeds in the present existence.

2.1.2 The Hell of 'Ussadanarok' (The Satellite Sites)

The Hell of 'Ussadanarok' makes up the satellite sites of the Hell of 'Mahanarok'. These sites are smaller in size than those in 'Mahanarok' and the forms of punishment are less cruel and violent. The pain and suffering in these sites are less severe than those in 'Mahanarok', and the heat from the hellfire is also less intense. There are moments of respite from punishment as well.

'Mahanarok' is like the head of the Hell Realm. Each 'Mahanarok' site is surrounded by four clusters of 'Ussadanarok' sites, one in each of the four directions. Each cluster makes up four 'Ussadanarok' sites and each 'Mahanarok' site is surrounded by four clusters or sixteen 'Ussadanarok' sites altogether. The number of all the 'Ussadanarok' sites surrounding the eight sites of 'Mahanarok' is 128 (16 X 8). The names of the 'Ussadanarok' clusters differ according to their locations and are as follows:

1. 'Guthanarok'
2. 'Kukkulanarok'
3. 'Asipattanarok'
4. 'Vetaraninarok'

Here we will mention only the 'Ussadanarok' clusters that surround 'Sanjiva Mahanarok'. These clusters represent the rest of the 'Ussadanarok' clusters that surround the other seven sites of 'Mahanarok'.

The First Site: Guthanarok

This site is filled with rotting excrement. All the hell beings that still possess remaining evil Kamma after having served their sentence in 'Mahanarok' will be bound for 'Ussadanarok'. They will be further punished in this site of rotting excrement.

Characteristics of ‘Guthanarok’: The site is filled with maggots possessing needle-like mouths. They are as big and fat as an elephant. They are filled with glee whenever a new arrival shows up. They will immediately surround the hell being and bite off its flesh greedily until only its bones are left. They will continue to gnaw at the bones. Some maggots are small and can crawl inside the hell being’s mouth to feed on its lungs, liver, spleen, heart, stomach, and crawl out through its openings above and below. The hell beings will be horrifically punished in this manner throughout the duration of their existence.

The Second Site: Kukkulanarok

It is a site of hot, burning ashes. Some hell beings after having gone through their existence in ‘Guthanarok’ will be sentenced to more punishment in ‘Kukkulanarok’ as dictated by their remaining evil Kamma. ‘Kukkulanarok’ is situated right next to ‘Guthanarok’.

Characteristics of ‘Kukkulanarok’: The site is filled with hot, burning ashes that burn the hell beings and cause them excruciating pain and suffering. Their bodies will eventually be burnt to cinder. When they come back to life again, they will have to undergo the same horrific form of punishment. The round of rebirth occurs until their sentence is served.

The Third Site: Asipattanarok

It is the site of the sword forest. Some hell beings after having gone through their existence in ‘Kukkulanarok’ will be sentenced to undergo more punishment in ‘Asipattanarok’ as dictated by their remaining evil Kamma. They will suffer horrifically at this site, which is located right next to ‘Kukkulanarok’.

Characteristics of ‘Asipattanarok’: The site is like a huge park with trees resembling mango trees. When the hell beings in this site go walking in the park together, they will see a big tree and walk toward it with the intention to rest underneath it. As soon as they are getting ready to sit down, there blows a gale wind that causes the leaves to fall off and turn into sharp spears and swords stabbing and cutting the hell beings until their limbs and their necks are severed. Their bodies are filled with deep gashes and wounds and are covered with blood. At the sight and smell of blood, hell dogs the size of an elephant rush toward the hell beings to feed on their bodies until bare bones are left. Afterward, there are hell vultures the size of a wagon or a car with iron beaks that fly down to tear at any remaining flesh. They will suffer this horrific punishment for the duration of their existence.

The Fourth Site: Vetaraninarok

It is the site of salt-water rivers filled with sharp spikes. Some hell beings after having served their sentence in ‘Asipattanarok’ will be sentenced to undergo more punishment in ‘Vetaraninarok’ as dictated by their remaining evil Kamma. This site is located right next to ‘Asipattanarok’.

Characteristics of ‘Vetaraninarok’: This site is filled with burning, salt water that exists throughout the entire earth age. Each river has an extensive network of barbed wire all along its perimeter. On the surface of the river appear many inviting lotuses. When the hell beings see the river, they expect the water to be clear, cool, fit for drinking and bathing. They become elated and rush toward the river and jump in. In that instant the network of barbed wire, as sharp as spears and swords, stab and cut into their bodies. They sustain painful wounds that burn in the salt water. Moreover, flames subsequently appear and burn their bodies to a crisp. For some hell beings, their bodies get caught in the network of barbed wire. Soon enough they fall into the lotus that contains sharp, corrosive, acid petals. Hot, burning flames are alight constantly in the middle of the flower. Any hell being caught inside the sharp, burning lotus will be torn into shreds. Some hell beings believe that they can escape the horrific suffering by diving deeper into the river. They will hold their breath and dive down only to be stabbed and cut by the underlying sharp swords strewn all over the bottom of the river. They suffer horrifically from their gaping wounds. Moreover, there are hell denizens to stab them with sharp weapons in the same manner as human beings spearing fish in the river.

After all is said and done, the hell denizens will use giant hooks to fish the hell beings out and force them to lie above an iron sheet. They use an iron lance to force the hell being’s mouth open and shoved a red hot iron coal into its mouth. The hot iron coal burns its way into the hell being’s mouth, throat, stomach, etc., until all the entrails burst out of the body. The hell being wails in excruciating pain. Or the hell denizens may pretend to ask the hell being what it wants and it answers, “Water. I am terribly thirsty. This iron coal is too hot”. At that point, the hell denizen will pour hot, molten copper into the hell being’s mouth. The hot, corrosive liquid causes severe damage to the hell being’s mouth, throat, stomach, etc., until all the entrails are corroded into shreds. The hell being will suffer this horrific form of punishment for the duration of its existence.

After each hell being has served its unimaginably long sentence in ‘Ussadanarok’, it has to go to the Hell of ‘Yomalok’ for further judgment.

2.1.3 The Hell of ‘Yomalok’

Most Thai people are familiar with some forms of punishment taken place in ‘Yomalok’ because these have been depicted on temple walls. Recently, there has been renewed interest among the viewers about ‘Yomalok’ when a play called ‘The Land of the Death Lord’ was shown on television. The plots have to do with the judgment of decent and indecent deeds of the departed ones. Nonetheless, there are still a large number of people that disbelieve the reality of ‘Yomalok’. They believe the play was just the writer’s attempt to make viewers fearful of sin.

The fact is the Lord Buddha discovered the truth about ‘Yomalok’ through the Buddha-Eye and taught it to His followers. These accounts were recorded in the ‘Tripitaka’. Later, Buddhist monks studied the Teachings and taught them to lay people. Among them were painters that took the time to depict what they learnt on temple walls to remind people of the fruit of misdeeds.

‘Yomalok’ is vastly different from the Hells of ‘Mahanarok’ and ‘Ussadanarok’ because besides being a place of punishment, it is also a place of judgment for the hell beings that have served their sentence in ‘Mahanarok’ and ‘Ussadanarok’. It is a place of judgment for the newly departed possessing a consciousness that is neither clear nor gloomy. After the judgment, the individual may be sent forth for a rebirth in the different planes of existence such as the Animal Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, the Hell Realm or the Celestial Realm. It all depends on the individual’s accumulated decent and indecent deeds.

‘Yomalok’ is a seat of judgment not unlike the judicial court on earth. ‘Yomalok’ can be considered a place that bridges the Human Realm with other realms of existence. It is a place of judgment for hell beings as well as for the fine physical forms of the recently dead. Once the judgment is passed, the individual will then be sent to have a rebirth in another plane of existence.

Therefore, ‘Yomalok’ contains more details than those in ‘Mahanarok’ and ‘Ussadanarok’. Before studying all the sites of ‘Yomalok’, the student will first be introduced to the general characteristics of ‘Yomalok’ in order to get an idea of its layout.

a. The Journey to ‘Yomalok’

There are two ways to arrive at ‘Yomalok’.

1. A human being arrives there after his death when he possesses a consciousness that is neither clear nor gloomy.
2. A hell being arrives there after having served its sentence in ‘Mahanarok’ and ‘Ussadanarok’.

At this point, only the arrival of a recently dead individual will be mentioned. The journey toward ‘Yomalok’ is mentioned in parts in Chapter 1. An individual is designated for ‘Yomalok’ when his mind is neither clear nor gloomy just before his death. That is neither the scenes of decent deeds nor the scenes of indecent deeds have a chance to show their clear effect. Upon his death, his refined physical form leaves the coarse human form. Some individuals have no idea that they are dead. Some individuals realize that they have died but have no idea where to go or what to do next because they have never studied the truth about life in the Hereafter as taught by the Lord Buddha. They go around visiting family members and friends but cannot make themselves heard or understood now that they exist in a different plane of reality. They do this for a period of seven days. This waiting period is actually the time during which they are given the opportunity to recall their accumulated ‘merit’.

When the period of seven days is up and if they still cannot recall any accumulated ‘merit’ because of their confused state of mind or because they did not perform any deed of ‘merit’, they will be met by celestial guards from ‘Yomalok’. These guards have a menacing appearance. They possess a huge body with very dark skin. Their black hair curls tightly around their heads. Their eyes are large and protruding. They wear only a red loincloth. They usually meet the newly departed with weapons and

chains, ready to tackle the refined physical form should it offer any resistance. If the recently dead used to have great power and influence, the number of guards will be higher. They all carry weapons in order to intimidate the dead individual. If he struggles with them in any way, he will be beaten and dragged away mercilessly. The guards will take the prisoner across the boundary of the planes of reality toward 'Yomalok'. They will go through an imposing entrance into 'Yomalok' before the recently dead is brought to await his judgment in a huge waiting area in front of the Judgment Hall.

b. Structural Characteristics of 'Yomalok'

There exist many walls and entrances into 'Yomalok' from different directions. They are made of different materials. The walls and the gate may be made of iron or copper. Some are stonewalls with a copper gate. Some are iron walls and the gate is made of wood. All the gates have sharp spikes on them. Below the imposing gate are guards on both sides of the gate. Above the gate are huge pots of fire that burn constantly. There are celestial officials with weapons all along the walls. It is a most fearsome scene.

Once one enters the gate, one will see a huge judgment hall and many administration buildings where the affairs of the different regions of the Hell Realm and their inhabitants are managed. The general atmosphere is gloomy and dark. The air is very hot and humid. The naked refined physical forms brought there from earth come from all nationalities and religious beliefs. The judgment hall is divided into two sides, the left and the right sides. In the middle of the hall there is a large platform on which stands a podium. There is a huge official stationed at the podium calling out the names of the refined physical forms to appear in front of the judgment throne. Around the platform there are more officials carrying weapons. When the name of the refined physical form is announced, it is announced according to the administration districts. The individual whose name is called will be escorted by the celestial guards to stand in a long line awaiting his turn to appear in front of the judgment throne.

The path in the middle leading toward the courtroom is very wide. This path is lined on both sides with huge pots alight with flames alternated with sculptures depicting scenes of the Hell Realm. These sculptures represent various forms of torture. At the end of the path there are steps leading up to the judgment throne of 'Phya Yomaraj' (the title of the celestial judge). On the steps and around the courtroom are sculptures of weapons such as saws, spears, knives, pikes, etc.

The courtroom covers a huge area. There are officials standing guard on both sides of the long path leading toward the judgment throne. The innermost wall of the courtroom is made of stone. Huge pots of burning fire are arranged along the stone wall. Next to the huge pots is the line of officials carrying weapons. Next to the officials is the judgment throne of 'Phya Yomaraj'. On both sides of the judgment throne are his two assistants sitting on a platform facing each other. The assistants are called 'Suwan Lekha' and 'Suwaan Lekha'.

The naked refined physical form is brought to kneel in front of 'Phya Yomaraj' for its hearing. After the sentence is pronounced, it will be taken to a side door which is next to the road that leads to another judgment hall. There are a large number of

these connecting roads. Each long road in turn ends at the huge ring road that encompasses the center of 'Yomalok', which comprises a huge pit. Within the pit there is a constant burning fire. The huge pit is a place of punishment for the hell beings of 'Yomalok'.

This ring road is divided into two sides. One side is for those sentenced to be punished there. The other side is for those sentenced to have a rebirth in other planes of existence. It has exits in different directions and at each exit there is a rest area for those awaiting their rebirth.

c. The Officials of Yomalok

The hell denizens of 'Mahanarok' and 'Ussadanarok' come into being as a result of the hell being's power of sin. In contrast, the officials in 'Yomalok' are 'Gumbhans'. They are a class of the 'Yakkha' Race (ogres). They dwell in the first celestial realm of 'Jatumaharajika' under the command of the celestial king, 'Thataratha'. They were previously human beings that were quick to anger, yet also accumulated some 'merit'. These officials work in shifts to carry out their duty in 'Yomalok' starting from a period of three, six, nine or twelve months. The length of the shift depends on the amount of 'sin' committed during one's human existence. Officials in 'Yomalok' include:

'Phya Yomaraj': He is a high-class 'Gumbhan'. He is casually attired and wears simple adornments. He possesses more 'merit' than the rest of the officials. His duty is to pronounce judgment on the hell beings not unlike the judges on earth.

'Suwan Lekha': He is a high-class 'Gumbhan'. His duty is to check the 'merit' ledger inscribed on gold sheets.

'Suwaan Lekha': He is a high-class 'Gumbhan'. His duty is to check the 'sin' ledger inscribed on leather sheets.

'Yomadut': He is a 'Gumbhan' possessing less 'merit'. He has a fierce countenance with huge, red eyes and very dark skin. He wears a red loincloth. His duty is to escort the refined physical forms from the Human Realm or the hell beings from 'Ussadanarok' to 'Yomalok'. A team of 'Yomaduts' is made up of the head of the team that possesses more 'merit' than the common 'Yomaduts'. He wears a large gold chain and carries fetters in his hands. The common 'Yomaduts' do not wear any adornment but carry weapons in their hands. During a mission, there may be a team of three, five or seven 'Yomaduts' depending on the title and position of the departed. The number of team members is increased according to the level of intimidation needed to control the recently departed.

d. The Hearing

When the name of the individual is announced, officials will escort the naked individual to kneel in front of 'Phya Yomaraj'. The hearing begins with 'Phya Yomaraj' asking the individual certain questions in a loud and commanding voice.

The hearing generally proceeds as follows: ‘Phya Yomaraj’ will ask the individual for his name, address, etc., to obtain some background on him. Next he will ask questions about his decent and indecent deeds. He may ask, “Do you know why you are here?” Most of the individuals will answer that they do not know. ‘Phya Yomaraj’ will then give the individual the reasons for his being there and invariably the individual will refuse having ever committed any misdeed. At this point, ‘Phya Yomaraj’ will have ‘Suwaan Lekha’ open the ‘sin’ ledger which will show the visual recording of the individual’s misdeeds. These moving images will appear in space in front of the judgment throne and allow the individual to witness his own misdeeds. Suppose the individual is guilty of drinking, the moving images will first show up for ‘Suwaan Lekha’ and subsequently appear in front of the judgment throne. The individual can see his human self getting drunk, killing animals for food and for sale, buying alcohol with the money that he received from selling animal meat, inviting his friends to drink with him, stealing money to buy alcohol, making merry after being drunk, etc. The visual recording of his misdeeds cannot be argued with. When the individual sees the evidence of his misdeeds, he will feel a real remorse causing his mind to become gloomy.

After the showing of the visual recording, ‘Phya Yomaraj’ will ask “What deeds of ‘merit’ did you ever perform?” The individual will answer, “I cannot remember.” The atmosphere in the courtroom is so intimidating that the individual is filled with terror and become incoherent. At this point, ‘Phya Yomaraj’ will ask ‘Suwan Lekha’ to open the ‘merit’ ledger. In this case, a small amount of good deed is found. The individual used to cut grass to feed a particular ox because he was fond of it. At this sight, the individual becomes very pleased.

Once the moving images of all the deeds of ‘merit’ and sin have been shown, ‘Phya Yomaraj’ concludes by saying, “You committed many sinful deeds as you can readily witness for yourself. Besides, your relatives have not dedicated any ‘merit’ to you since your death. The officials will now take you to the place of punishment in accordance with your sinful deeds.”

The purpose of the hearing by ‘Phya Yomaraj’ is to give the individual the opportunity to recall his ‘merit’ accumulated during his human existence. If any individual accumulated any ‘merit’ at all, the visual recording from ‘Suwan Lekha’ allows the individual to further recall more of his ‘merit’. This makes it less likely for the individual to have a rebirth in the Hell Realm. But if he accumulated a great deal of ‘sin’ and only a small amount of ‘merit’ as shown in the example above, he will definitely be sentenced for punishment in the Hell Realm. When performing deeds of ‘merit’, it is best to follow the Lord Buddha’s Teachings. Deeds of ‘merit’ performed for animals bear little fruit when compared to those performed for the Buddhist monks. The hearing by ‘Phya Yomaraj’ is given in detail in the ‘Dhevatut Sutta’. The interested student can learn more on the subject from this Sutta.

e. The Location and Number of Sites in Yomalok

The student has learnt from Chapter 1 that ‘Yomalok’ is situated underneath ‘Mount Trigut’, which forms the base of ‘Mount Sineru’ and lies in the same latitude as

‘Ussadanarok’. ‘Yomalok’ makes up the minor sites that surround all eight sites of ‘Mahanarok’. Each ‘Mahanarok’ site is surrounded by ‘Yomalok’ clusters on all four sides. Each side consists of a cluster of ten sites. There are one cluster at the front, one at the back, one at the right, and one at the left of each of the ‘Mahanarok’ sites. Since ‘Mahanarok’ has eight sites, and each site is surrounded by forty minor sites; there are therefore a total of 320 ‘Yomalok’ sites in ‘Mahanarok’. All the ten sites in each Yomalok cluster share the same names. The name reflects the type of punishment that takes place at that particular site. They are as follows:

1. Lohagumpi Narok.
2. Simapli Narok.
3. Asinakhana Narok.
4. Tamabotaka Narok.
5. Ayogula Narok
6. Pissakapappata Narok.
7. Dhusa Narok.
8. Sitalosita Narok.
9. Sunakha Narok.
10. Yantapasana Narok.

f. Details of Each of the Yomalok Sites.

The student will now learn the detailed characteristics of each of the ‘Yomalok’ sites.

The First Site: Lohagumpi Narok

It is the site of hot iron pots. Each pot is the size of a mountain, filled with hot boiling water at all times. It is placed over a stove fueled with the hellfire. The official will seize the hell being’s ankles and dunk its head into the hot iron pot causing it to suffer tremendously. Sometimes the official will chase after the hell being with a whip of burning iron. The official will cause the whip to curl around the hell being’s neck and its head will be snapped off. The official will then throw the severed head into the hot iron pot. As soon as the hell being’s head is snapped off, it will grow a new head to undergo the same torture over and over again until it has served its sentence.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of This Site: The forms of punishment in this site result from the evil Kamma of killing. For example, the individual used to prepare food by throwing live animals into a boiling pot. The punishment can also result from other forms of evil Kamma. However, the individual in this case did later on feel remorse for his evil Kamma and tried to rectify the situation by accumulating decent deeds.

The Second Site: Simapli Narok

This site is filled with red cotton trees with sharp acid spikes the length of which is about sixteen index fingers. The forest is constantly alight with flames. This site is filled with male and female hell beings. At times, a female hell being is waiting at the top of the tree while a male hell being is beaten with a spear or a lance and forced to climb the cutting, corrosive tree until blood spurts out from all over its body. The hell being tries to beg the officials for mercy but receives only more beatings. It has to continue climbing to the top of the tree in spite of its tremendous suffering. The female hell being will eventually fall off the tree only to be poked and stabbed by the officials’ sharp weapons and forced to climb back up the tree. However much blood spurts out

from their bodies, they have to continue the cycle of climbing up the sharp, corrosive tree and falling off it over and over again.

Some hell beings while climbing up the tree may be pecked by vultures and crows with iron beaks until their entrails are exposed. They feed on the hell beings' entrails causing them to suffer horrific pain. Once they fall off the tree, they will be further assaulted by a pack of huge hell dogs that bite and eat their flesh.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of This Site: During their human existence, they committed sexual misconduct by violating the Third Precept. They committed adultery without feeling ashamed of their evil deeds or being fearful of the consequences of their evil deeds.

The Third Site: Asinakhana Narok

The hell beings of this site have bizarre and deformed forms. They have long and sharp fingernails and toe nails the shape of a sharp spear or a sharp hoe. They pick their flesh with their nails and eat it for the duration of their existence here.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of This Site: During their human existence, they were in the habit of stealing things belonging to the public, stealing from offerings made to the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

The Fourth Site: Tamabotaka Narok

In this site, there are a large number of iron pots filled with bubbling molten copper mixed with stones and gravel. Officials will force the hell being to lie face up on a hot iron sheet alight with fire. They will then force-feed the hell beings with the molten copper mixture until their entire bodies disintegrate. The hell beings will come back to life again to undergo the same punishment over and over again for the duration of their existence.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of This Site: During their human existence, they were in the habit of getting drunk and behaving like a mad person.

The Fifth Site: Ayogula Narok

This site is filled with hot, burning iron pieces. They are strewn all over the place. The hell beings here are filled with terrible hunger as a result of their previous evil Kamma. When the hell beings see the hot iron pieces, they will fight each other for them believing them to be delicious food. After the hell beings chew on the hot iron pieces and swallow them, their entrails will be burnt into shreds and spill out of their bodies. The hell beings suffer excruciating pain.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of This Site: During their human existence, they were inordinately greedy. They told people about 'merit-making' opportunities, collected the money from the people and donated a small amount of the collection if at all to charity causes but spent most of the money on themselves.

The Sixth Site: Pissakapappata Narok

In this site there are huge mountains in all directions. These mountains are constantly on the move rolling over the hell beings and crushing them to death. The hell beings will come back to life to undergo the same torture over and over again for the duration of their existence here.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of This Site: During their human existence, they assumed positions of power but used their power unethically. They acted like mafia bosses intimidating the people under their rule, causing them undue hardship.

The Seventh Site: Dhusa Narok

The hell beings in this site are filled with terrible hunger and thirst. They run frantically all over the site in search of food and water. When they see a pond of clean, clear, cool water, they rush to jump in and drink the water. When the water reaches their stomach, it turns into chaff that alights with fire. The fire burns through their entrails causing them excruciating pain and suffering.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of This Site: During their human existence, they were merchants of inordinate greed. They were dishonest and cheated their customers by mixing bad merchandise with good merchandise or mixing authentic goods with fake ones. They will suffer the same torture for the duration of their existence here.

The Eighth Site: Sitalosita Narok

The water in this site is frigidly cold. The hell beings that fall into the water will die because of its coldness but the power of their evil Kamma will cause them to come back to life. They hurry to crawl out of the fatally cold water. Once they are out of the water, there are officials waiting to toss them back into it. They will undergo this cycle of torment for the duration of their existence here.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of This Site: During their human existence, they were mean and cruel. They enjoyed tossing live animals into the water or binding their hands and feet before drowning them. They also caused their fellow human beings to suffer and die from being drowned.

The Ninth Site: Sunakha Narok

This site is filled with hell dogs that can be divided into five groups as follows:

1. Black hell dogs.
2. White hell dogs.
3. Yellow hell dogs.
4. Red hell dogs.
5. Piebald hell dogs.

These dogs all share the same characteristics. They are huge and fierce. They bark and howl loudly. The sounds echo like thunder all across the site. The hell beings of this site will be constantly assaulted by the hell dogs.

Besides the packs of fearsome hell dogs, there are also flocks of crows, adjutant birds, and vultures. The mouth and feet of these birds are hot iron alight with fire. When they spot a hell being, they will fly close to it and peck at its eyes. They will tear open its chest and eat its entrails until the hell being dies. The hell being will subsequently come back to life and suffer the same cruel torment over and over again for the duration of its existence here.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of This Site: During their human existence, they habitually hurled biting, degrading remarks at their parents, grandparents, and siblings. When they were angry, they would assault others verbally. They did not care who were at the receiving end. They did it to old people, to righteous individuals such as monks, ascetics, etc.

The Ten Site: Yantapasana Narok

There are two mountains in this site. They are bizarre in that they are mechanical mountains that crash into each other rhythmically and ceaselessly. There are officials to catch the hell beings and toss them in between the mountains. The hell beings' bodies will be completely crushed by the force of impact. The two mountains perform the task of a huge grinder. The hell beings will suffer this cruel fate over and over again for the duration of their existence here.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of This Site: During their human existence, they habitually abused their spouses verbally and physically in anger. They chased after their spouses with a stick or a knife, and committed adultery as well.

The subject of 'Yomalok' is highly interesting because its planes of existence are very close to the Human Realm. Some people disbelieve the existence of 'Yomalok' and often make up stories about 'Phya Yomaraj', and make fun of him. This is very dangerous. The student may have heard of a particular account of a man that was dead and came back to life after seven days. The temporarily dead came back with a story of his vivid encounter in the Hereafter. He felt that he had been gone for a long time. He remembered being taken to a most frightening place but when an official checked his ledger, he found out that a mistake of identity had been made. He was subsequently escorted back to his coarse physical form because his time on earth was not yet up. This individual's name is Major Sanoh. His account made headlines about twenty years ago.

In addition, many may have heard through their grandparents that when facing death, some individuals became terrified as if someone was about to hurt them. Or they saw a man wearing a red outfit standing in front of them. Some of these accounts may sound unbelievable to those who have never encountered such a scene. Nonetheless, one should perform many good deeds just to be on the safe side. One can then be considered as having lived his life without recklessness.

2.1.4 The Hell of ‘Logantanarok’ (The Special Site)

This is a special site beyond ‘Mahanarok’, ‘Ussadanarok’, and ‘Yomalok’. It is an interesting site reserved for those that have committed many grave deeds of unwholesomeness. ‘Logantanarok’ is located outside the universe. It is located in an area where the outer edges of three universes meet. It can be compared to three lotuses that come together to form a space in the middle. This space is called ‘Logantanarok’.

The hell beings of ‘Logantanarok’ are enormous in size. They have long finger- and toe-nails because they have to use their nails to cling to the edge of the universe. They have to hang like bats that way forever. They constantly wonder why they are there all by themselves, since ‘Logantanarok’ is filled with total darkness. They grope around in the dark in terrible hunger. When one hell being finds another, it will think of the other as food and they will wrestle with each other until both fall into the sea of frigidly cold, acid water below. Their bodies are eaten away and they die. When they come back to life they will have to undergo the same horrific torment over and over again throughout an entire Buddhist Eon. Their sentence lasts an entire earth age.

Previous Kamma of the Hell Beings of this Site: During their human existence, they committed grave misdeeds. They harmed and mistreated their parents. They harbored the ‘Wrong View’ and did not believe in the reality of the ‘Hereafter’. Therefore, they habitually committed grave misdeeds. They were verbally abusive to their parents, grandparents, and siblings. They had a foul temper and were in the habit of hurling abusive remarks at elderly people or even at individuals that practiced righteousness such as ascetics, monks, novices, etc.

Conclusion

The student has already learnt that the Hell Realm belongs to the States of Unhappiness. These planes of existence are filled with horrific forms of suffering the gravest of which occur in ‘Mahanarok’ where no respite from punishment can be found. After the sentence in ‘Mahanarok’ is over, the punishment continues on in ‘Ussadanarok’. Although there are some moments of respite here, the forms of torture are still extremely cruel. For individuals that committed a great deal of misdeeds, they will receive further punishment in ‘Yomalok’.

2.2 The Peta Realm

The Hell Realm is a place of horrific punishment for individuals that committed a great deal of misdeeds during their human existence. The next topic deals with the life conditions of the ‘Peta’ Realm. It is another interesting plane of existence of the Hereafter.

Certain types of ‘Petas’ exist in a plane parallel to the Human Realm. It is a more refined plane of existence and is not visible to naked human eyes. It goes to show that

just because we cannot see something does not mean it does not exist. The Lord Buddha confirmed the reality of 'Petas' and knew the cause of rebirth in the Peta Realm as stated the 'Maha-seehanart Sutta'.

Besides the Lord Buddha, a large number of His disciples also knew the Peta Realm well. One of these disciples was the Chief Disciple 'Mahamoggallana'. He possessed great supernormal powers. Many times while he was on his alms-round with his fellow monks, he encountered 'Petas' with different appearances. During the encounter, he did not make it known to his fellow monks. He would only give an account of his encounter in the presence of the Lord Buddha upon his return to the temple. The Lord Buddha would then confirm what the great 'Mahamoggallana' saw was true.

If the student searches the 'Tripitaka', he will find many writings about 'Petas' and their interesting categorization. The student can find such writings in the 'Khudadakanikaya' (Smaller Collection) and 'Petavatthu' (stories of the departed) Scriptures.

2.2.1 The Meaning of the Peta Realm

The Peta Realm is where Petas live. It is one of the four unfortunate realms belonging to the States of Unhappiness. Petas are beings of misery. They live in constant hunger. They differ from the hell beings that are also beings of misery because the hell beings are constantly tortured by the hell denizens or celestial officials.

2.2.2 Location of the Peta Realm and the Types of Petas

The Peta Realm is located underneath 'Mount Trikut' which is the realm of demons (Asurakayas) but in the gorges of the mountain in its own special realm of existence. There are certain types of Peta that live in a plane of existence parallel to the Human Realm.

Petas come into being in two general ways as follows:

1. They come from other planes of existence and become Petas because of their remaining evil Kamma after they have served their sentence in 'Mahanarok', 'Ussadanarok', and 'Yomalok'.
2. They come from the Human Realm as a result of their evil Kamma committed during their human existence. The main causes come from extreme miserliness and/or greed. They rise spontaneously as Petas right after their death.

Regardless of where they come from, as Petas they experience only suffering and for a very long time. Petas' lifespan varies. It depends on their evil Kamma. Some Petas live for an entire Buddha Eon. Some live for a shorter time, some for a longer time. The Peta relatives of King Bimbisara lived in suffering for four Buddha Eons.

2.2.3 Types of Petas

It was recorded in the Buddhist Scriptures that there are four main types of Petas. These can be divided into twelve families and further arranged into 21 groups. The details of these different Petas are as follows:

The Four Types of Petas. In the 'Petavatthu' Scripture, there were mentioned four main types of Petas as follows:

1. **Paraduttupajivika Petas:** They live on food offerings made to them by human beings.
2. **Khupapipasika Petas:** They suffer constant hunger and thirst.
3. **Nijajhamatanhika Petas:** They are constantly alight with burning fire.
4. **Kalakanjika Petas:** They are Asurakaya-Petas.

The Apadana (the Lives of Arahats) Commentary, the Suttanipata (Collected Discourses) Commentary, and the Buddhavamsa (the History of the Buddhas) Commentary indicate that all the Bodhisattas after receiving the Buddha Forecast will not have a rebirth as a Khupapipasika Peta, a Nijajhamatanhika Peta or a Kalakanjika Peta. If a confirmed Bodhisatta must have a rebirth in the Peta Realm, he will be reborn as a Paraduttupajivika Peta only.

The Twelve Types of Petas. In the Scriptures Lokabannatipakara and Chagatitipanipakara there were recorded twelve types of Peta as follows:

1. **Vantasa Peta:** They eat saliva, phlegm, and vomit for food.
2. **Kunapasa Peta:** They eat human and animal corpses for food.
3. **Guthakhataka Peta:** They eat excrement for food.
4. **Aggijalamukha Peta:** Their mouth is constantly alight with fire.
5. **Sucimukha Peta:** Their mouth is the size of a pinhole.
6. **Tanhattita Peta:** They suffer constant hunger and thirst.
7. **Nijajhamaka Peta:** They are as black as a charred stump.
8. **Sabbanka Petas:** They have fingernails and toe nails as long and as sharp as a knife.
9. **Pabbatanga Peta:** They have a body as huge as a mountain.
10. **Ajagranga Peta:** They have the form of a python.
11. **Mahidadhika Peta:** They possess enormous supernormal powers.

12. Vemanika Peta: They endure suffering during the day but during the night they can enjoy celestial happiness in a celestial castle.

The Twenty-One Types of Peta. In the Scriptures Vinaya and Lakhanasanyutta, there were recorded twenty-one types of Peta as follows:

1. **Atthisankhasika Peta:** They possess a skeleton and are fleshless.
2. **Mansapesika Peta:** They possess connecting pieces of flesh but are boneless.
3. **Mansapinda Peta:** The body is just a lump of flesh.
4. **Nicchavi Peta:** They have no skin.
5. **Asiloma Peta:** They have daggers for body-hair.
6. **Sattiloma Peta:** They have lances for body-hair.
7. **Usuloma Peta:** They have arrows for body-hair.
8. **Suciloma Peta:** They have pins for body-hair.
9. **Tutiyasuciloma Peta:** They also have pins for body-hair.
10. **Kumbhanda Peta:** They have huge testicles.
11. **Kuthakupanimugga Peta:** They are immersed in excrement.
12. **Kuthakhataka Peta:** They eat excrement for food.
13. **Nicachavitaki Peta:** Female Petas that are skinless.
14. **Tuggandha Peta:** They exude rotten malodor.
15. **Ogilini Peta:** They have burning coals for a body.
16. **Alisa Peta:** They are headless.
17. **Bhikku Peta:** They look like a monk.
18. **Bhikkuni Peta:** They look like a female monk.
19. **Sikhamana Peta:** They look like a female novice monk that has undergone two years of training to get ready to become a female monk.
20. **Samanera Peta:** They look like a novice monk.
21. **Samaneri Peta:** They look like a female novice monk.

2.2.4 Details of the Twelve Families of Petas

The student has already learnt the different ways to categorize Petas but the following details pertain to the twelve families of Petas only.

The First Family: Vantasa Petas

This family of Petas possesses hideous and fearsome appearances. They suffer tremendous hunger. When they see any human spit or phlegm on the ground, they will get all excited and rush to suck up whatever flavor they can extract from the phlegm. But their hunger can hardly be assuaged. They will suffer in this manner until they have served their sentence and obtain a rebirth in another plane of existence.

A rebirth as a Vantasa Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence, he was extremely miserly. When a hungry person came by to beg for food, he became furious and spat at the person with contempt. Or he went into holy places such as a consecrated assembly hall, a Buddha-Image hall, a Cetiya, and behaved with disrespect by spitting saliva or phlegm on these holy grounds. These behaviors caused him to have a rebirth as a Vantasa Peta.

The Second Family: Kunapakhata Petas

The Petas of this family have hideous appearances. They go everywhere in search of corpses for food out of their tremendous hunger. Whenever they see any corpse, they will rush to it to suck up whatever flavor they can extract from it.

A rebirth as a Kunapakhata Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence he turned away beggars or gave them what they should not have given out of spite. He was contemptuous of the beggars and behaved toward them in a spiteful manner. These behaviors caused him to have a rebirth as a Kunapakhata Peta.

The Third Family: Guthakhataka Petas

The Petas of this family have revolting, hideous appearances. They go in search of human excrement, the smellier it is the more they like it. They rush to the excrement like a pack of hungry dogs and bend down to suck up whatever flavor they can extract from the excrement. Alas, their hunger is never assuaged.

A rebirth as a Guthakhataka Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence he was extremely miserly. When his relatives fell on hard times or when someone came to ask him for help, for food or for a drink, he became incensed at them. He pointed to a pile of animal excrement and said, "If you are really hungry, feed yourself on that because you won't get any food and drink from me." He then chased the poor, desolate people away and cursed them with foul words. When he dies, he becomes a Guthakhataka Peta.

The Fourth Family: Aggijalamukha Petas

The Petas of this family are terribly thin and they have hot flames coming out of their mouths all the time day and night. The hot flames burn their mouths and tongues causing them tremendous pain. They can only run and whimper piteously for a hundred or a thousand leagues to try and quench the flames but the fire does not go out, instead it continues to burn their mouths and tongues even more fiercely.

A rebirth as an Aggijalamukha Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence, he was extremely miserly. When a destitute person came begging, he did not really want to give the person anything but for fear of incurring criticism, he gave the poor person something much too hot to eat or drink. He committed this spiteful act to punish the beggar and discourage him never to come begging anything from him again. He could not understand the benefit of giving.

The Fifth Family: Sucimukha Petas

The Petas of this family have bizarre forms. They have huge feet, a very elongated neck but the mouth is the size of a pinhole. Food can hardly pass through their mouths in spite of their great desire to eat. They suffer tremendously. Their bodies are terribly thin and charred.

A rebirth as a Sucimukha Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence he was miserly. When a destitute person came begging for food, he refused to give him anything. He had no respect for ascetics or monks that practiced righteousness and refused to offer them any alms. He clung to his possessions tenaciously. His evil Kamma caused him to have a rebirth as a Peta with a mouth the size of a pinhole.

The Sixth Family: Tanhajita Petas

The Petas of this family have a terribly thin body just like the Petas in other families. They suffer tremendous hunger and thirst. They are constantly searching for food. When they spot a pool, a pond or a stream, they feel so excited and rush to it only to find it change into something else.

A rebirth as a Tanhajita Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence he was very possessive of his food and water sources. He cut off water supply to others in need. After he died he became a Peta that is plagued with tremendous hunger and thirst.

The Seventh Family: Nijdhamakka Petas

The Petas of this family look like a charred post. They stand very tall and have a very dark and a most frightening appearance. They exude terrible malodor. Their hands and feet are crippled. The top lip hangs over the lower lip. They have long teeth and their incisors grow out of their mouths. Their hair is long and unkempt. They suffer tremendous hunger. They stand still in one place. They do not wander around like other Petas.

A rebirth as a Nijdhamakka Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence, he had a mean nature. He became angry whenever he saw a monk or an ascetic that practiced righteousness. His unwholesome mind caused him to believe that the monks or ascetics came to beg from him. He used contemptuous gesture and offensive language to chase the righteous away and caused them to suffer embarrassment. Or when their parents turned old and decrepit, they employed various methods to cause them fright so they would die quickly and he could enjoy his inheritance sooner.

The Eighth Family: Sabbanka Petas

The Petas of this family are enormous. Their finger- and toe-nails are as long and sharp as a sword or a knife and curve into a hook. They spend all their time bending over to scratch their bodies until they are full of wounds. They eat their own flesh and blood for food.

A rebirth as a Sabbanka Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence, he was in the habit of extorting money from people. He often took advantage of others. Sometimes he also abused his parents by pinching them and scratching them. As a woman, she often pinched and scratched her husband.

The Ninth Family: Pabbatanka Petas

The Petas of this family are the size of a mountain. During the night their bodies are alight with fire, during the day they are surrounded by smoke. These Petas suffer burns and smoke inhalation. They would lie down and roll back and forth like a dead tree rolling in the middle of a field. They suffer so terribly and they wail so loudly as though they are about to die.

A rebirth as a Pabbatanka Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence, he burnt down houses, schools, the monks' cells, a consecrated assembly hall, etc.

The Tenth Family: Ajagara Petas

The Petas of this family have animal forms. Some look like a python, some look like a tiger, a horse, a cow, a water buffalo, etc. Their bodies are immersed in hot flames all day and all night long.

A rebirth as an Ajagara Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence, he was miserly. When monks or ascetics came to visit, he verbally abused them by comparing them to all kinds of animals because he did not want to give them any alms. Or they taunted the monks or ascetics with model figures of animals.

The Eleventh Family: Mahidadhika Petas

The Petas of this family have supernormal powers and beautiful forms but they suffer tremendous hunger. They wander all over the place in search of excrement and other revolting materials for food.

A rebirth as a Mahidadhika Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence, he was ordained as a novice or a monk. He endeavored to keep his Precepts meticulously; hence he has a beautiful Peta form. But he did not practice according to the Dhamma-Discipline. He was lax and his mind was filled with greed, anger, and ignorance. He had a mistaken view that it was enough to observe the Precepts; he did not have to give alms or be charitable. Because of this misunderstanding, he has a rebirth as a Mahidadhika Peta.

The Twelfth Family: Vemanika Petas

The Petas of this family possess celestial wealth. They possess celestial mansions made of gold. Some enjoy the happiness of a celestial being during the day, but at night they suffer the consequences of their stinginess. Some enjoy celestial happiness by night but during the day they suffer the consequences of their evil Kamma.

A rebirth as a Vemanika Peta occurs because during the individual's human existence he was wise enough to accumulate merit but he did not observe the Precepts. He did not keep his body, his words and his mind wholesome. Or he had followed the Lord Buddha's Teachings by observing the Precepts only and did not bother to accumulate other forms of merit. Deep down, he had doubts about the fruit of merit and sin. He observed the Precepts as a matter of course rather than with sincere intention.

2.2.5 Case Studies Involving Petas

Examples of Petas will allow the student to gain a better understanding of each type of Petas as well as their past evil Kamma that led them to have a rebirth in the Peta Realm. These cases in the abbreviated version are presented below.

A Flesh-Peta I

Once, the Chief Disciple, Mahamoggallana saw a floating Flesh-Peta in the air. There were vultures, adjutant birds flying around him and pecking at his flesh. The Flesh-Peta wailed piteously. He thought it most amazing and recounted the experience to the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha gave an account of the Peta's previous existence as follows:

During the Peta's human existence, he slaughtered cattle for a living. After he died, he went to the Hell Realm and suffered horrifically there for a very long time. After his sentence had been served in the Hell Realm, his residual evil Kamma caused him to undergo further suffering as a Flesh-Peta.

A Flesh-Peta II

The great Mahamoggallana on another occasion saw a floating Flesh-Peta in the air with his celestial eye. He was being attacked by vultures and adjutant birds and he wailed piteously.

The Lord Buddha revealed that during the Peta's human existence, he killed birds for a living. After having served a very long sentence in the Hell Realm, his residual evil Kamma caused him to undergo more suffering as a Flesh-Peta.

A Skinless Male Peta

Once, the great Mahamoggallana saw with his celestial eye a skinless male Peta floating in the air. He was being pecked and pestered by vultures, crows, adjutant birds. This skinless male Peta could only wail piteously.

The Lord Buddha revealed that during the Skinless Peta's human existence, he slaughtered sheep for a living. After the sheep was killed, he would remove its skin and sell it. Sometimes he removed the sheep's skin while it was still alive. After having served a very long sentence in the Hell Realm, his residual evil Kamma caused him to undergo more suffering by having a rebirth as a Skinless Peta.

A Skinless Female Peta

On another occasion, the great Mahamoggallana saw with his celestial eye a skinless female Peta floating in the air. She was being pestered and pecked by flocks of vultures, crows, and adjutant birds. She could only wail most piteously.

The Lord Buddha revealed that during the Skinless Peta's human existence, she committed adultery and went to live with her lover. After she died, she was punished in the Hell Realm for a very long time. Her residual evil Kamma caused her to undergo additional suffering as a Skinless Peta.

A Headless Peta

On one occasion, the great Mahamoggallana saw a headless Peta with his eyes and mouth on its chest. He was floating in the air. He was pestered and pecked by flocks of vultures, crows, and adjutant birds. He could only wail piteously.

The Lord Buddha revealed that during this Peta's human existence, he earned the wrong livelihood by being an executioner and used to decapitate thieves. His name was 'Harika' and he lived in the city of Rajgarh. After his death, he went immediately to the Hell Realm and was there for a very long time. His residual evil Kamma caused him to have a rebirth and undergo more suffering as a Headless Peta.

A Monk-Peta

A long time later, the great Mahamoggallana saw Petas that looked like a monk, a female monk, a Sikkhamana (a female monk with two year's training), a novice, and a female novice. They were all floating in the air. Their robes, their alms-bowls, and their cummerbunds were all on fire. They were burnt by the flames and could only wail loudly.

The Lord Buddha revealed that during these Petas' human existence, they had the most excellent opportunity of being ordained a monk, a female monk, a Sikkhamana, a novice, and a female novice in the time of the Lord Kassapa Buddha. But they transgressed against the Dhamma-Discipline. Their conduct was deplorable and they

did not follow the Lord Buddha's Teachings. After their death, they all went to the Hell Realm and suffered horrifically there for a very long time. Their residual evil Kamma caused them to have a rebirth in the Peta Realm to undergo more suffering.

The types of Petas in these cases bear witness to their residual evil Kamma. They had all committed unwholesome deeds during their human existence. After having been tortured and punished for a very long time in the Hell Realm, their residual evil Kamma caused them to assume different Peta forms. Therefore, these Petas are also called Residual-Kamma Petas.

2.2.6 Petas That Can Receive 'Merit'

In the following section the student will learn about the types of Petas that can receive 'merit' dedicated to them from the Human Realm. Of these 12, 4, and 21 types of Petas, there is only one Peta type that can receive 'merit'. They are the Paradattupajivika Petas. The rest of the Petas can not receive any dedicated 'merit' because where they live is much too far from the Human Realm. The Paradattupajivika Petas live within people's homes. For example, an individual might have been murdered or died naturally but given his ties to the family, he has become a Peta living in another plane of existence right there in the family home. They sometimes appear to their relatives and other people. These Paradattupajivika Petas are sometimes referred to as ghosts.

In spite of the fact that these Petas live among their human relatives, if they have no idea that 'merit' has been dedicated to them, they will not be able to receive it. The reason is they do not know how to rejoice in the 'merit' by saying 'Sadhu! Sadhu!' Short of this knowledge and action, even a Paradattupajivika Peta cannot properly receive any merit dedicated to them.

In regards to the dedication of 'merit' to individuals that have departed, the Lord Buddha enlightened us on the subject through His conversation with King Bimbisara as recorded in the **Tirokudda Sutta**.

Petas can be found everywhere living among us in a parallel plane of existence. Some of their relatives may be preparing food and beverages as alms to be offered to the Buddhist monks. Due to the Petas' evil Kamma, their relatives neglect to dedicate the 'merit' made from the alms-offering to them. For the more fortunate Petas, their relatives remember to dedicate the 'merit' to them and ask that the 'merit' will keep their departed relatives happy. These more fortunate Petas know to rejoice in the 'merit' and are grateful to their relatives. They realize that whatever creature comforts they possess are the result of the 'merit' dedicated to them by their relatives. The Lord Buddha taught that in the Peta Realm there was no agriculture, no farming, no buying, and selling with money. Petas could live more comfortably only because of the 'merit' dedicated to them by their human relatives.

From these Teachings, the student can see how Petas suffer tremendous hunger and must wait for the merit dedicated to them by their living relatives in order for their hunger to be assuaged. If their relatives do not believe in the merit of alms-giving or in the dedication of merit, they will indeed suffer tremendous hunger for a very long time.

2.2.7 Petas That Cannot Receive Merit

All the beings that left the Human Realm have gone their separate ways. Some had a rebirth in the Hell Realm, some in the Animal Realm, some in the Peta Realm far removed from the Human Realm. Although the surviving relatives make merit often and dedicate the merit to their departed loved ones, they cannot receive it. The merit made only benefits the merit-makers. A departed relative may have a rebirth as a dog living in the same house. It however cannot benefit from any merit dedicated to it by its surviving relatives.

On the part of the merit-maker, although his dead relative (the dog) cannot receive the dedicated merit, the dedicated merit remains with the merit-maker throughout his present and future existences.

Therefore, after the merit is dedicated to the departed ones, the merit-maker should abstain from the type of merry-making that involves alcohol drinking or other forms of entertainment either at home or at the temple. Before any merit-making activity, the merit-maker should first request the Precepts in order to keep his mind tranquil. He should also reflect on the certainty of death. In this way, the merit made will bear great fruit. He will earn 100% of the merit and the merit dedicated to departed loved ones will also be 100%.

If the merit-making process is tainted with different forms of entertainment, and one's mind is not tranquil, the merit earned will be small. Therefore, the fruit of merit-making amidst all forms of entertainment is naturally small and the merit dedicated to departed loved ones will be small as well.

2.2.8 The Cause of Rebirth as a Peta

Rebirth in the Peta Realm with its accompanying suffering does not occur without cause.

Unwholesome deeds cause a human being to have a rebirth in the Peta Realm. Unwholesome deeds are misdeeds committed through one's body, words, and thoughts. These misdeeds can also cause one to have a rebirth in the Hell Realm. These unwholesome deeds will be mentioned here again as a reminder.

The Ten Unwholesome Deeds

a. Physical misdeeds or misdeeds committed through the body. They include:

1. Killing.
2. Stealing.
3. Sexual misconduct.

b. Verbal misdeeds or misdeeds committed through one's words. They include:

1. Lying
2. Divisive speech
3. Offensive speech
4. Nonsensical speech

c. Mental misdeeds or misdeeds committed through one's thoughts. They include:

1. Greed
2. Vengefulness
3. Wrong View

When an individual commits these unwholesome deeds, he can be prepared to have a rebirth in the Peta Realm as soon as he dies. Worse than that, if his misdeeds are grave enough to send him to the Hell Realm; his residual evil Kamma will force him to have a rebirth in the Peta Realm afterward.

For some individuals whose misdeeds are not quite as grave, they do not have to go to the Hell Realm but will have a direct rebirth in the Peta Realm.

When a human being commits unwholesome deeds that are punishable by a rebirth in the Peta Realm, he will know during his last breaths where his next destination will be. This prescience is called 'Gatinimitta' or the sign of the Hereafter. For example, one might see dark gorges or a dark cave, a place of silence and barrenness. One might see a large amount of husks and shriveled grains while feeling hunger and thirst pangs. One might see revolting pools of blood and pus yet eat and drink of them for nourishments.

These scenes appear very clearly to the dying and stick in his mind. As soon as he dies, he will have an immediate rebirth in the Peta Realm. He has to undergo tremendous sufferings as a result of his evil Kamma. His 'Gatinimitta' has already shown him where his next destination will be. His misdeeds do the work of causing him to have a rebirth as a Peta.

Conclusion

The Lord Buddha compared the Peta Realm to trees that grow in uneven ground with young and old leaves. These trees are light and airy. The Peta Realm is an unpleasant place because it is parched and full of torments. An individual whose unwholesome deeds take him to an unwholesome path is said to head for the trees of discomfort, which is the Peta Realm.

The student should have realized by now how fortunate we all are indeed to have found the Lord Buddha's Teachings in this existence. Now that we have heard the wise Teachings of our Lord Buddha, how can we continue to behave in an unwholesome manner just because we are stubborn and harbor the wrong view? How can we not have faith in the Lord Buddha's words and willingly risk being reborn in a place where the trees offer no comfort, a parched land which is the Peta realm? Therefore, it behooves us to quickly abandon the unwholesome path before it is too late.

2.3 The Asurakaya Realm

Another interesting category of beings that share many characteristics with the Petas are called Asurakayas. They are so similar that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish one from another. In the following section the student will learn enough to be able to tell the difference between these two categories of beings.

The Asurakaya Realm is the third realm of the unfortunate realm or unfortunate realm belonging to the States of Unhappiness. It is a place devoid of cheer. Beings from the Human Realm or the Hell Realm that end up in the Asurakaya Realm will not experience joy or pleasure of any kind. They will experience only severe suffering for a long time as a result of their evil Kamma committed during their human existence. Still, their torments here are far lighter than those in Mahanarok, Ussadanarok, and Yomalok.

2.3.1 Location of the Asurakaya Realm

Asurakayas are very similar to Petas. They also undergo similar torment. Moreover, they live in the same location, which is in the gorges below Mount Sineru.

2.3.2 Existence Condition of the Asurakayas

The Asurakayas' existence condition is just as terrible as that of most of the Petas. Some Asurakayas are hideous and bizarre. For example, they may have a very thin body and are hundreds or thousands of meters in height. They appear to have no flesh or blood but only skin covering the bones. They look like corpses; they look like dry leaves. Their bodies exude a terrible malodor. Their eyes are small like the crab's and they are not located on the face like human eyes but are located at the crown of their heads. They have a tiny mouth, the size of a pinhole, and it is situated at the crown of their heads close to their eyes.

Besides the extremely bizarre forms, they have a life of severe hardship. They are constantly tortured by tremendous hunger and thirst. It is most difficult for them to look for food because of the small size of their eyes and their grossly disproportionate height. Having their eyes located at the crown of the head makes it more difficult for them to locate food. Once they find it, eating is severely hampered because of the location of the mouth. To eat, they have to stand on their heads with their feet pointing upward. The eating is made more difficult by the tiny size of their mouths. They have to suffer tremendous hunger and thirst in this way for thousands or tens of thousands of years until the term of their sentence is up.

2.3.3 The Cause of Rebirth as an Asurakaya

Rebirth as an Asurakaya is caused by the individual's unwholesome deeds during his human existence. The main factor is greed, which drives the individual to want what belongs to others and to obtain it in a dishonest way. For example, when the individual is seized by greed, he might steal or cheat in order to get what he wants. He does not

earn an honest living. He eyes others' possessions with covetousness and jealousy. He perpetrates against others in order to get what he wants.

Or the individual may become so greedy that he misappropriates the Sangha's funds, which have been donated by lay devotees toward the Buddhist cause. Or when a well or a pond has been dug for public use and the individual cannot have exclusive use of it, he tries to destroy it out of his meanness so others cannot use it. After the individual dies, his unwholesome deeds will pull him to the Hell Realm to burn and suffer there for a tremendously long time. After having served his sentence in the Hell Realm, his residual Kamma will cause him to have a rebirth in the Asurakaya Realm. There he has to suffer tremendously for a very long time until the remaining evil Kamma is spent.

2.3.4 The Differences between Petas and Asurakayas

As mentioned earlier, Petas and Asurakayas share many common characteristics, which include the condition of their existence and their previous evil Kamma. These two realms are very close to each other, hence, the term 'Petas-Asurakayas'. However, there is enough of a difference between Petas and Asurakayas and can be described as follows:

1. All the beings that have a rebirth in the Peta Realm besides having to serve their sentence according to their previous evil Kamma, they have to suffer terribly from tremendous hunger. Throughout their sentence, they have nothing to eat. They are overwhelmed with hunger for the duration of their existence.
2. All the beings that have a rebirth in the Asurakaya Realm suffer tremendously mainly from terrible thirst. They are here because of their evil Kamma. For some of them, for an entire period of 2-3 Buddha Eons, not even one drop of water touches their tongue. Sometimes they may see a pond, a lake, or a river and be filled with joy believing that their thirst will finally be quenched. They struggle to get to the water only to find it turn into hot flames burning them and causing them severe pain. Or it may turn into dry stones. These Asurakayas' hearts dry up because of their tremendous thirst. They have to undergo tremendous suffering until their previous evil Kamma is spent.

The student can by now appreciate the differences between Petas and Asurakayas. By appearance, they are very similar but Asurakayas' forms are much more bizarre. However, it is difficult at times to distinguish them. Therefore, they can be differentiated by the suffering they have to undergo. Petas suffer from tremendous hunger but Asurakayas suffer mainly from tremendous thirst. Both types of beings experience only severe hardship because they live in the unfortunate realms. These realms are condemned places and are totally devoid of happiness.

The student has now gained a better understanding about the Asurakaya Realm, the Asurakayas' characteristics, the condition of their existence, their previous evil Kamma, and the differences between Petas and Asurakayas. We must realize that our misdeeds can lead us to places of loss and woe, which include the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, and the Asurakaya Realm. Therefore, with the limited amount of time we have

in our life, we must endeavor always to abandon indecency and to perform only decent deeds. In this way our mind will be clear and bright, which in the end helps us to avoid the places of loss and woe.

2.4 The Animal Realm

The student has already learnt about the three Unfortunate realms. The last Unfortunate realm is the Animal Realm (Tiracchan Realm), which is considered as part of the hereafter belonging to the States of Unhappiness.

The Tiracchan Realm is the plane of existence for beings that have their bodies parallel to the ground. That is, the chest turns toward the ground as seen in dogs, cats, mice, chicken, ducks, snakes, fish, etc. As animals, their minds are not capable of attaining the holiest state of Nibbana regardless of whatever decent deeds they might be able to perform. At the very most, they can experience the feeling of pure devotion and have a rebirth in the Celestial Realm after their death.

2.4.1 Location of the Animal Realm

We can witness the animal forms with our eyes, whereas Petas and Asurakayas are invisible to us. Some types of animals are close to human beings because they live with us. In general, however, animals do not stay in one place, and have no homes of their own. This is in contrast to the hell beings, which live in a particular site. Hell beings with seriously evil Kamma live in one site and serve their grave sentence in that site until the term of the sentence is over. They will have a rebirth in another site of the Hell Realm if their evil Kamma dictates it. On the other hand, animals must travel on land, wander in the forest, or in the water. They live on earth in inestimable number.

2.4.2 Existence Condition of Animals

Animals have a much harder life than human beings because danger is everywhere for them. Survival is terribly difficult. It is an unfortunate and uncomfortable condition. They have to search for food all the time. They have to compete fiercely for food. They live in constant fear. The danger to their lives may come from human beings or from other animals. It is a life full of suffering and they have to undergo the birth-death-rebirth cycle as an animal for countless times until their evil Kamma is spent.

Although the Animal Realm is filled with suffering in regards to their search for food and constant fear, animals are still much better off than the hell beings, the Petas, and the Asurakayas. As animals, they can still enjoy certain pleasant aspects because their evil Kamma is present only in light amount. The Animal Realm possesses three pleasant aspects as follows:

1. Kamasanna: The ability to enjoy sensual pleasures.
2. Gocarasanna: The ability to eat (and sleep).
3. Maranasanna: The ability to fear death.

Hence, the Tiracchan Realm can also mean the realm in which its inhabitants experience these three pleasant aspects.

However, animals have no idea about what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. They are ignorant of what is right or wrong, what is good or evil. That is, they are ignorant of Dhammasanna except for Bodhisatta animals which are extremely rare.

2.4.3 Types of Animals

There are innumerable types of animals. Some live on land but more live in water. Their appearances are vastly different. Their sizes span from as big as an elephant to as small as beings invisible to naked eyes. The Buddhist Scriptures divide animals into 4 kinds as follows:

1. **Apadatiracchan:** Animals that have no appendages such as fish, snakes, earthworms, etc.
2. **Davipadatiracchan:** Animals that have two legs such as birds, ducks, chicken, etc.
3. **Catupapadatiracchan:** Animals that have four legs such as elephants, horses, cows, buffaloes, etc.
4. **Pahupapadatiracchan:** Animals that have many appendages such as shrimps, spiders, centipedes, millipedes, etc.

In categorizing animals, biologists can categorize them in many ways depending on the application. For example, they can be divided into two kinds which include land animals and aquatic animals. Or they can be divided into three kinds which include land animals, aquatic animals, and amphibians. The categorization given in the Scriptures has been made by the number of appendages, which is a very convenient way to group animals.

2.4.4 The Cause of Rebirth as an Animal Realm

Rebirth in the Animal Realm is caused by a light amount of evil Kamma committed during the individual's human existence. This evil Kamma arises mainly from ignorance or from not knowing things as they truly are. For example, an individual might be overly attached to his family members, to his assets, or to both. When he dies, he will then be reborn as an animal in order to stay close to his loved ones and/or to guard his former assets.

Another cause of rebirth in the Animal Realm is the light amount of evil Kamma left over after the individual has served his sentence in other realms of loss and woe such as the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, and the Asurakaya Realm. Animals will undergo the round of rebirth as an animal for countless times as the same kind or a different kind of animal. They all have scant opportunity to perform any wholesome deed.

In spite of this scant opportunity, they are still much more fortunate than beings in the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, and the Asurakaya Realm. These most unfortunate beings have absolutely no opportunity to perform any wholesome deed. In spite of the scant opportunity to perform a wholesome deed, some animals can still hope to have a rebirth in the Celestial Realm as in one example that occurred before the times of our Lord Gautama Buddha. It concerned a woman named 'Samavadi'. Her story in an abbreviated version is as follows:

Before the time of our Lord Gautama Buddha, there was a cow-herder that had a very smart dog. The cow-herder was devoted to a Silent Buddha (Pacceka Buddha) and regularly requested Him to have a meal at his house. Later on this man could not extend the invitation to the Silent Buddha in person; therefore, he sent the dog in his place. The dog would then lead the Silent Buddha to the cow-herder's house and protected Him from wild animals during His walk. Some time later when it was near the Rains-Retreat, the Silent Buddha came for alms and the cow-herder made an offering of material enough for three robes to be made. The cow-herder also requested the Silent Buddha to spend the Rains-Retreat near his house if He so wished but the Silent Buddha had to be somewhere else. When the time came for the Silent Buddha to leave, the cow-herder and his dog escorted the Silent Buddha for some distance. At a certain point, the Silent Buddha soared into the sky and flew from sight. The dog had felt such love for the Silent Buddha that it howled in sorrow at the Silent Buddha's departure until it died. At death, the dog had a rebirth as a celestial being in the Tavatimsa Realm.

The above example is given here as a confirmation that in spite of scant opportunity to perform a wholesome deed, an animal still has a chance to have a rebirth as a celestial being, a human being, or a being in a higher realm.

The student can appreciate how difficult life is for animals. They are pitiable and they scarcely experience happiness because of their remaining evil Kamma. Now that the student has this information, it behooves him/her to be extra careful and to perform only wholesome deeds. He/she should abandon any act of indecency and perform only good deeds. He/she should follow the Lord Buddha's Teachings so that he/she will never have to spend his/her Hereafter in the Animal Realm.



The Hell of Yomalok

CHAPTER 3

THE HUMAN REALM

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 3

THE HUMAN REALM

- 3.1 The Meaning of the Human Realm**
- 3.2 Location of the Human Realm**
- 3.3 The Jombu Continent, the Continent of Differences**
- 3.4 Types of Human Beings**
- 3.5 The Cause of Rebirth as a Human Being**

CONCEPTS

1. The Human Realm is the plane of our existence. It is the dwelling for the noble-minded because human beings can differentiate between good and evil. When we set our mind to accomplish a decent deed, we are capable of the greatest good. However, when we set out mind to commit a misdeed, we are also capable of the most atrocious act.
2. The Human Realm covers four different worlds or Continents which include the Pubbaviteha Continent, the Aparagoyana Continent, the Jombu or Rose Apple Continent, and the Uttarakuru Continent. These Continents are located along the four directions surrounding the Great Mount Sineru. Human beings of each Continent share the same physical characteristics but differ in size, proportion, refinement and beauty. The lifespan of human beings in each Continent stays the same except for the Jombu Continent where it varies depending on the human conduct at any particular period.
3. Human beings can be categorized according to their deeds. They can be categorized as Hell-human, Peta-human, Animal-human, and Celestial-human.
4. It is indeed difficult to have a rebirth as a human being because there are 30 other planes of existence where rebirth can occur. If we are to compare the number of rebirth in the Human Realm with that in each of the other planes of existence, it is really small. A rebirth in the Human Realm is caused by the virtue of the Five Precepts, which are considered to be the human norm.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to describe the meaning of the Human Realm.
2. To enable the student to describe the locations of the Human Continents.
3. To enable the student*. to describe the different types of human beings.
4. To enable the student to describe the cause of rebirth as a human being.

THE HUMAN REALM

Introduction

The student has already learnt about the four states of loss and woe. He can appreciate that these are places of terrible suffering. The student can also conclude that the cause for rebirth in these unfortunate realms is the evil Kamma committed during the individual's human existence. This should indicate the true importance of the Human Realm to our continuous existence in Samsara. Our Lord Buddha talked about how difficult it was to be reborn as a human being in the 'Buddhavak' Scripture.

When we consider the round of rebirth within the 31 planes of existence and the total number of their inhabitants, we will find the number of human beings to be very small indeed. There is a much greater number of individuals that have a rebirth in the Celestial Realm (or heaven), the Form Brahma Realm, and the Non-Form Brahma Realm. The number of individuals that have a rebirth in the States of Unhappiness, which include the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Animal Realm, is the largest.

If we consider things thoroughly we will find that the States of Happiness are the realms for reaping the fruit of an individual's wholesome deeds. We will also find that the States of Unhappiness are the realms for reaping the fruit of an individual's unwholesome deeds. We can realize that the Human Realm is the hub of good and bad deeds.

In this chapter, the student will learn about the plane of existence that has the most direct relevance to us, which is the Human Realm. This chapter provides an explanation about our self and our fellow beings. We are not approaching the subject scientifically but we are doing so according to the Buddha-Science in which we will learn about how the Lord Buddha viewed human beings.

3.1 The Meaning of the Human Realm

We will first consider the meaning of human beings from the Pali language. The word 'Manussa' is a combination of the words 'Mana' which means 'mind' and 'Ussa' which means 'high'. Therefore, the word 'Manussa' means a high- or noble-minded being because his mind possesses decency. He is responsible, he knows about merit and sin, he demonstrates

loving-kindness, etc. The Human Realm or the Realm of 'Manussa' can be interpreted as the realm of the noble-minded. Other meanings of the word 'Manussa' are as follows:

1. Thriving and courageous.
2. Know what is proper and improper.
3. Know what is useful and useless.
4. Know what is wholesome and unwholesome.
5. The sons of 'King Manu'.

The fifth meaning came about because at the beginning of the current earth age, a Bodhisatta, who went by the name of 'Manu', had been chosen by the people to rule over them. 'Manu' ascended the throne and was given the name 'King Mahasammata'. He set up a system of rules and regulations to enable the people to live together in peace. His subjects obeyed all the rules and regulations the way an obedient son would follow his father's teachings. Therefore, his subjects were called 'Manussa' which meant the sons of 'King Manu'

3.2 Location of the Human Realm

We have already mentioned in Chapter 1 that the Human Realm consists of four Continents suspended in space in the same latitude as the slope of the Great Mount Sineru in four directions. The Great Mount Sineru is the center of our universe. The names and locations of the four Continents are as follows.

1. **Pubbaviteha:** It lies to the east of the Great Mount Sineru.
2. **Aparagoyana:** It lies to the west of the Great Mount Sineru.
3. **Jombu (or Rose Apple):** It lies to the south of the Great Mount Sineru.
4. **Uttarakuru:** It lies to the north of the Great Mount Sineru.

Most of the people in the world who have not begun to study the Lord Buddha's Teachings tend to believe that human beings exist only in this planet when in fact, human beings live in four different Continents. But we cannot reach these other three continents because they are very far away from us. Moreover, their physical makeup is far more refined than our plane of existence hence they are not visible to our naked eyes. They are, however, visible through our celestial eye.

Characteristics of Human Beings: Human beings in all four Continents share similar physical appearance in terms of the body and the face. We differ in size, proportion, and refined beauty. For example, the faces of human beings in the Jompu Continent have an oval shape. Those in the Aparagoyana Continent have a round shape, as round as a full moon. The faces of human beings in the Pubbaviteha Continent look like a half-moon,

while those in the Uttarakuru Continent have a rectangular shape. Human beings in these three other Continents share the same level of good looks because the population as a whole possesses similar virtue and moral value. This is unlike our Jompu Continent where our looks differ greatly depending on the differences in our overall Kamma.

Human Beings' Lifespan: At the beginning of the Kappa (a Kappa is an earth age) when the Human Realm was highly civilized and prosperous, human beings in all four Continents lived to be one Asonki Year. The reason is human beings in the early Kappa possessed very light amount of unwholesome attachments in the forms of greed, anger, and ignorance. Their wholesome nature caused the environment such as the land, the sky, the air, and the food source to be perfect. These favorable circumstances allowed human beings in the early Kappa to enjoy an inestimably long lifespan.

As time passed, unwholesomeness began to creep into the minds of human beings in all four Continents. This degradation of moral value and virtue caused the environment to change such that when it was cold, it became too cold, when it was hot, it became too hot, and it rained out of season. Nutritional values of produce and grains decreased. These changing circumstances caused human beings' lifespan to gradually decrease. When it reaches 1,000 years, it remains constant for human beings in the Uttarakuru Continent because their unwholesome attachments remain at the same level. In the same way, the lifespan of human beings in the Pubbaviteha Continent remains constant at 700 years, and it is 500 years for human beings in the Aparagoyana Continent.

Only in the Jompu Continent that human beings' lifespan continued to decrease as a result of the increasing level of their unwholesome attachments until their lifespan decreased to the minimum level of 10 years. All the food that used to be tasteful became tasteless. The environment deteriorated precipitously. People were plagued with a high level of anger. This caused pervasive mass killing and bloodshed all over the Continent for a period of 7 days. During the holocaust, there were groups of human beings that went to hide in distant gorges, and began to perform wholesome deeds. This positive change caused the human lifespan to increase again gradually until it reached 80,000 years and continued to increase until it reached one Asonki Year. The lifespan of human beings in the Jompu Continent goes up and down in this manner according to the level of their unwholesomeness. Evidence of this phenomenon appears in the **Cakkavatti Sutta**, where the student can find more details.

With the exception of the Jompu Continent, human beings in the other three Continents live comfortably. They live in a clean, pure environment devoid of pollution. Their food and water sources are plentiful. They are not plagued by diseases in the way that human beings of the Jompu Continent are. The reason is these human beings observe the Precepts normally and regularly. Human beings in the Jompu Continent vary a great deal in their living condition. Some are very comfortable, some are adequately comfortable, and some have a difficult life. Their life condition is dependent upon their individual deeds performed during each of their human existences in the Jompu Continent. Thus, the living condition of each human being in the Jompu Continent is uniquely different.

The next topic deals mainly with the Jompu Continent since it is where we live. In addition, it is a place of wide differences and provides for an interesting study. The study of the Jompu Continent enables us to live our life happily and helps us to avoid the suffering of the realms of loss and woe.

3.3 The Jompu Continent, the Continent of Vast Differences

All the student has to do is to look around him and he will easily notice the vast differences among us. Take for example our 32 physical parts, we can see that some possess all 32 parts, some have more and some have less. Some of us possess beautiful, delicate complexion. Others possess rough complexion dotted with discoloration. Some are born in a wealthy family. Others are born in a poor family. Were we to look for ways to explain the cause of these differences ourselves, we will for sure go insane. The Lord Buddha shed light on these differences in the **Julakammavibhanga Sutta**, which states that:

All beings possess their own Kamma. We are the heirs of our Kamma. It is our Kamma that determines our birth, our race, and our circumstances. In other words, our Kamma makes us uniquely different.

From this Sutta, the student can better understand that our overall past deeds accumulated through our countless existences cause us to be different in so many ways. Our deeds and their consequences, which give rise to our differences, can be summarized as follows.

Our Deeds	Their Fruit
Killing, lack of compassion	A short lifespan
No killing, being compassionate	A long lifespan
Exploitation of humans and animals	Afflicted with all kinds of illnesses
No exploitation of humans and animals	Suffering from few illnesses
Being irritable, being callous	Bad complexion
Not irritable, not callous	Glowing complexion
Jealousy	Powerless
No jealousy	Powerful
Miserliness	Poverty, destitution
Generosity	Wealth, prosperity
Brash, arrogant	Low-born
Not brash or arrogant	High-born
No thirst for knowledge, not learning from the wise	Possessing a low intellect
Thirsting for knowledge, learning from the wise	Possessing a high intellect

The student can see that every single one of our deeds has its consequence. And it is the sum of our deeds that makes us different. If we are to say that our past and present deeds determine our life, the subject under discussion becomes more comprehensible. In this sense we can say that if we desire longevity, we must not kill. If we desire wealth, we must give generously. That is, if we desire a particular fruit, we must perform a corresponding deed. The more we can accumulate wholesome deeds, the happier and more prosperous our life will be. Prosperity in turn enables us to accumulate more and more decent deeds. For example, if we are very wealthy, we can be all the more generous and our contributions will be tremendous. If we are capable and blessed with past merit, we can meet with success in anything we do in our current lifetime.

In spite of the vast differences among human beings in the Jompu Continent, our general characteristics are far inferior to those in the other three Continents. Still we possess certain special and superior characteristics in that we possess a higher capacity to accumulate great good deeds. These special characteristics are:

- 1. Surabhava:** A stout, courageous heart dedicated to the practices of alms-giving, Precepts observing, and meditation.
- 2. Satimanta:** Being cognizant of the grace and power of the Triple Gem.
- 3. Brahmacariyavas:** The ability to practice chastity by becoming ordained as a Buddhist monk.

These three special attributes make human beings in the Jombu Continent stand out from human beings in the other three Continents. Since the Jombu Continent is the plane of great differences, all the Bodhisattas, who aspire to become a Buddha one day in the future, have chosen the Jombu Continent as a place for their eventual enlightenment. All human beings in the other three continents possess human decency. They are blessed in terms of their looks, wealth, and personal quality. Were a Buddha to happen there and give His sermons, these human beings will not be able to comprehend the Truth because they have everything they need in life. For example, the Lord Buddha may teach about aging, they will not be able to comprehend it because they do not age. They all look beautiful or handsome throughout their years; they are not afflicted with any illnesses, etc.

3.4 Types of Human Beings

Human beings' life condition differs according to their past Kamma as described in the above section. It is the sum of these past deeds that divides human beings into four types as follows.

- 1. The Hell-Human:** These are human beings that possess a raw nature. They are mean, cruel, bad and rotten to the core. They are in the habit of inflicting pain on others.

They behave dishonestly and earn a wrong livelihood. They kill animals, they kill people, they steal, etc. They have a mean spirit and enjoy intimidating and bullying innocent people. Their villainous mentality seems to indicate that they have just emerged from the atrocity and cruelty of the Hell Realm. These individuals do not like to live in a regular house but prefer to be kept in prison, stripped of any freedom, and undergo terrible suffering.

2. The Peta-Human: These are human beings that encounter severe hardship in life. They have to search for food and clothing, which are hard to come by for them. However hard they work to earn a living, they can barely subsist. They suffer from hunger and unhappiness. In a place where others can earn a comfortable living, they however cannot. These human beings are branded as ‘Kalakini’, which means ‘ill fortune’. Their life condition seems to indicate that they have just emerged from the Peta Realm, the realm of hunger and scarcity.

3. The Animal-Human: These are human beings that live with others in the status of a pet or farm animal and must do whatever work is demanded of them. They may work hard to accomplish something but in the end they have to accept whatever their master decrees. When it comes to food, they have no right to choose what they can eat and have to eat only leftovers. Whenever their master scolds them, they become frightened. They can hardly find any comfort anywhere because they are dominated by their past evil Kamma. They are ignorant and have no idea how to earn their own living or liberate themselves from their masters. They suffer terribly from self-imposed slavery. The Animal-Human type results from the past evil Kamma of wrongdoings. They did not understand the debt of gratitude they owed to their parents and teachers. As a result, they disobeyed their parents and teachers; they were stubborn and argued with them constantly. They were extremely disrespectful toward them.

4. The Deva-Human: These are human beings that know what is useful and what is harmful. They understand sin, merit, virtue, and the negative consequences of misdeeds. They know what is good and what is bad. They abstain from anything sinful and unwholesome. They believe in decency and observe the Five Precepts on a regular basis. They are ashamed of sin and are fearful of its consequences. They live their life in a purposeful way. They are noble-minded and regularly perform deeds of merit. They give alms, observe the Precepts, and practice meditation on a regular basis. They practice these deeds of merit themselves and invite others to do the same. They are the personification of Devas (celestial beings) reborn on earth.

Besides categorizing human beings according to the Kamma of their previous existences, they can also be categorized according to their past and present Kamma that will affect their future existences. This categorization was recorded in the **Puggala Sutta** whereby human beings are divided into four different types as follows:

Type 1: Human beings that came from darkness and are going toward darkness. These human beings accumulated a great many misdeeds in their previous existences, thus they are born in abject poverty, handicapped, and lacking the opportunity to perform

meaningful activities. In spite of the unfortunate condition of their life, they continue to behave immorally. They commit sinful, unwholesome deeds physically, verbally, and mentally. When they die, they will have a rebirth as a being in the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, or the Animal Realm. The condition of their existence dips lower and lower and their future prospect grows dimmer and dimmer.

Type 2: Human beings that came from darkness and are going toward brightness. These human beings albeit living a life of hardship as a result of their past evil Kamma, they are able to discern the real cause of their hard life. They can teach and discipline themselves. In spite of a lack of good opportunities, they are not discouraged by their misfortune. They depend on their own decency, their diligence, and their Kalayanamits (virtuous friends) to guide them to continue accumulating wholesome deeds through their body, their words, and their thoughts. When they die, they will have a rebirth in the Celestial Realm.

Type 3: Human beings that came from brightness and are going toward darkness. These human beings are born under fortunate circumstances in a noble family. They have a comfortable life and earn their livelihood easily. They have plenty of opportunities to perform wholesome deeds. They however live their lives carelessly and recklessly. They use their fortunate circumstances to indulge in unwholesome deeds. They are unethical and immoral. When they die, they will have a rebirth in the unfortunate realm, in the realm of darkness.

Type 4: Human beings that came from brightness and are going toward brightness. These human beings are born under fortunate circumstances in a noble family. They have no difficulty earning their livelihood. They give alms, observe the Precepts, and practice meditation to the fullest extent. They are not careless or reckless. They have used their life opportunities to accumulate wholesome deeds. When they die, they will have a rebirth in the States of Happiness.

Now that the student has learnt how human beings can be categorized according to their deeds, the student will now need to look back at himself and consider which type of human beings he belongs to. He can then change his ways and continue to improve himself for his own happiness both in the present and future existences.

3.5 The Cause of Rebirth as a Human Being

As mentioned earlier in this chapter that rebirth as a human being is a rare occurrence. Some students may object to such a statement seeing that babies are born all the time and the world population is on the rise such that the world will soon become severely overpopulated. Such thinking is not considered wrong but it is a one-sided view. He needs to view the situation with the depth of the Lord Buddha's vision. The Lord Buddha considered all the beings in the thirty-one realms of existence, and compared the birth rate in the Human Realm to those in the rest of the realms of existence. He found

the rebirth rate in the Human Realm to be almost incomparably smaller. The Lord Buddha gave the following analogy as an illustration of this very rare phenomenon. Suppose there is one blind turtle living in the sea. There is a loop at the end of a rope large enough for the turtle to let its head go through, and this loop was floating at the surface of the water. This blind turtle will only come up for air every 100 years. The chance that this blind turtle will get his head caught in the loop is impossibly rare. As impossibly rare as this incident may be, so is human rebirth.

We can then ask what it is that makes human rebirth so rare. First, it needs to be understood that the Five Precepts are required for human rebirth. The reason is the Five Precepts form the basic human virtue. The student may notice how often the Five Precepts are mentioned in Buddhism. During all important meritorious ceremonies, the Five Precepts are always requested as part of the ceremony. The fact is it is not easy to keep the Five Precepts meticulously. To do so requires diligence and a good understanding of the Precepts. If one only hears about them but never actually practice them, one's life is at risk because the way toward the unfortunate realms has already been paved. Therefore, it behooves the student to gain an understanding of the Precepts as explained briefly here.

The Pali word for the Precepts is '**Sila**'. '**Sila**' has a few meanings but the clearest and most practical meaning is: **the human norm**. There are five types of conduct that constitute the human norm:

1. The first human norm is '**no killing**', **no destroying of life**. Life is most precious to all whether they are human or animals. When life is gone, everything else is over. Therefore, human beings do not kill or exploit other living beings.
2. The second human norm is '**no stealing**'. Aside from life, we all love and protect our assets; we will never want anyone to steal them from us. Therefore, human beings do not steal from others.
3. The third human norm is '**no sexual misconduct**' against another person's child, wife or husband. Besides loving our self, we also love our child, wife or husband. We cannot easily forgive anyone that commits a sexual offense against those whom we love. Therefore, a human being loves only his/her own spouse.
4. The fourth human norm is '**no lying**'. Sincerity and honesty are very important virtues. When a child, a wife or a husband that love each other greatly lies to one another or is dishonest, the love can erode. Therefore, human beings do not lie or deceive each another.
5. The fifth human norm is '**no consumption of addictive substances**'. Addictive substances cause the consumer to lose his/her awareness and decrease his/her decency. They cause the consumer to behave inappropriately and be prone to transgress against other Precepts. Therefore, human beings do not consume alcohol and other addictive substances.

The student can learn more about the Precepts from the textbook entitled ‘The Way of the Buddhists’.

The student can now understand that the human norm was not legislated by the Lord Buddha as popularly believed. However, it was the Lord Buddha that discovered the truth about how the Five Precepts constituted the human norm. The norm every human being must abide by regardless of his race or creed. Not abiding by the human norm will cause terrible harm to oneself and others.

The Five Precepts are what clearly differentiate us from animals. If we apply the Five Precepts to the scientific concept that human beings came from apes, we can see how deficient and faulty this concept really is. It is not reasonable that scientists should imply an ape’s connection with human from its bone structure, its intelligence, or its posture. Where intelligence is concerned, there are many types of animals that show the same amount of intelligence as an ape. But if we are to consider the issue of ‘Dhamma Knowledge’ or the knowledge of right and wrong, good and bad according to the Five Precepts, we will find how terribly deficient the apes are in these matters.

Therefore, whoever desires rebirth in the Human Realm needs to observe the Precepts meticulously and continuously until his last moments on earth. When he dies, he will reap his rewards in the Celestial Realm. Once he ceases to be from the Celestial Realm he can then be reborn in the Human Realm once again.

CHAPTER 4

THE CELESTIAL REALM

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 4 THE CELESTIAL REALM

4.1 Preliminary Understanding about the Celestial Realm

- 4.1.1 The Meaning of the Celestial Realm
- 4.1.2 Location of the Celestial Realm
- 4.1.3 The Birth and Death of Celestial Beings
- 4.1.4 The Origin of Celestial Beings' Names
- 4.1.5 Gradations of Human Beings' Decent Deeds
- 4.1.6 Rebirth in Any Particular Celestial Realm Is Determined by the Characteristic of the Merit – Making Activities
- 4.1.7 Requirements for Rebirth in the Celestial Realm

4.2 The Catummaharajika Realm (the First Level of the Celestial Realm)

- 4.2.1 The Meaning of Catummaharajika
- 4.2.2 Location and Characteristics of the Catummaharajika Realm
- 4.2.3 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Catummaharajika Realm
- 4.2.4 The Birth and Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Catummaharajika Realm
- 4.3.5 The Government in the Catummaharajika Realm

4.3 The Tavatimsa Realm (the Second Level of the Celestial Realm)

- 4.3.1 The Meaning of Tavatimsa
- 4.3.2 Location and Characteristics of the Tavatimsa Realm
- 4.3.3 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Tavatimsa Realm
- 4.3.4 The Birth and Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Tavatimsa Realm
- 4.3.5 Romantic Life of Celestial Beings in the Tavatimsa Realm
- 4.3.6 The Practice of Welcoming New Arrivals
- 4.3.7 Celestial Activities on Buddhist Holy Day on the 14th or 15th Day of the Waxing Moon

4.4 The Yama Realm (the Third Level of the Celestial Realm)

- 4.4.1 The Meaning of Yama
- 4.4.2 Location and Characteristics of the Yama Realm
- 4.4.3 The Birth and Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Yama Realm
- 4.4.4 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Yama Realm

4.5 The Tusita Realm (the Fourth Level of the Celestial Realm)

- 4.5.1 The Meaning of Tusita
- 4.5.2 Location and Characteristics of the Tusita Realm
- 4.5.3 The Birth and Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Tusita Realm
- 4.5.4 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Tusita Realm
- 4.5.5 The Reasons the Tusita Realm is the Center of Knowers

4.6 The Nimmanarati Realm (The Fifth Level of the Celestial Realm)

- 4.6.1 The Meaning of Nimmanarati.
- 4.6.2 Location and Characteristics of the Nimmanarati Realm
- 4.6.3 The Birth and Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Nimmanarati Realm
- 4.6.4 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Nimmanarati Realm

4.7 The Paranimmitavasavatti Realm (the Sixth Level of the Celestial Realm)

- 4.7.1 The Meaning of Paranimmitavasavatti
- 4.7.2 Location and Characteristics of the Paranimmitavasavatti Realm
- 4.7.3 The Birth and Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Paranimmitavasavatti Realm
- 4.7.4 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Paranimmitavasavatti Realm

4.8 Conclusion

CONCEPTS

1. The Catummaharajika Realm is the first level of the Celestial Realm. It is part of the Sense-Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. This realm contains the most diversity because of its inhabitants' many races. Some categories of celestial beings in this level live in a plane parallel to the Human Realm. The Catummaharajika Realm is located on the Great Mount Sineru. It is under the sovereign rule of the Tavatimsa Realm. Its name means the realm of the Four Great Kings, since it is governed by four kings. King Dhataratha governs the east of the realm. He rules over the Gandhabbas (celestial musicians), the Vidayadhons (sorcerers and sorceresses), and the Kumbhands (officials of the Hell of Yomalok). King Virulahaka governs the south of the realm. He is in charge of the Garudas. King Virupaksa governs the west of the realm. He is in charge of the Nagas. King Vessuvan governs the north of the realm. He is in charge of the Yakkhas. These four kings are also referred to as Catulokabal kings because they oversee the four Human Continents. Celestial beings in this realm are divided into three different classes: high, medium and low. High class celestial beings dwell on the Great Mount Sineru, middle class celestial beings dwell in the Himavanta Forest, and low class celestial beings dwell on a plane of existence parallel to earth. One day and night in this realm is equal to 50 earth years. The average lifespan in this realm is 500 celestial years.

2. The Tavatimsa Realm is the second level of the Celestial Realm. It is part of the Sense-Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. This celestial level is located on top of the Great Mount Sineru. It is called Tavatimsa because it is governed by 33 kings. The head king is King Sakka or Indra. He is in charge of both the Catummaharajika and the Tavatimsa Realms. Inhabitants of these two realms can visit one another because they are both situated at the Great Mount Sineru. The lifestyle in this realm is more refined than the first celestial level. There are a large number of pleasurable places which include celestial parks, lotus ponds, etc. Most importantly, it contains the 'Culamani' Cetiya, which houses the Lord Buddha's canine teeth and topknot. It is a place of worship for celestial beings from every level. One day and night in this realm is equal to 100 earth years. The average lifespan in this realm is 1,000 celestial years.

3. The Yama Realm is the third level of the Celestial Realm. It is part of the Sense-Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. This realm is situated above the Tavatimsa Realm at a distance of about 42,000 leagues or 672,000 kilometers. The name of the realm is derived from the name of its sovereign, which is King Suyama. The brightness in this celestial realm does not come from the sun like the Catummaharajika Realm because it is too far away from the sun's orbit. The Yama Realm is lit by the radiance of everything contained in it. From this realm upward, no dark corners can be found. All matters exude their own radiance and do not cast any shadow. The lifestyle in this realm is more pleasurable and more elaborate than the first two celestial realms. One day and night in this realm is equal to 200 earth years. The average lifespan in this realm is 2,000 celestial years.

4. The Tusita Realm is the fourth level of the Celestial Realm. It is part of the Sense-Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. This celestial realm is situated above the Yama Realm at a distance of about 42,000 leagues or 672,000 kilometers. It is called Tusita because the realm is ruled by King Santatusit. This realm is more extraordinary than other celestial realms in one outstanding aspect. It is the dwelling of all Bodhisattas, who will become enlightened as a Buddha in the distant future. Inhabitants of this realm can wish to cease to be in order to be reborn in the Human Realm for the express purpose of accumulating a critical level of merit. They do not have to wait until the end of their lifespan in the way that celestial beings in other realms have to. Celestial beings in this realm possess great wisdom. They are not reckless about the way they live their lives unlike the way celestial beings in other realms are prone to be. They spend their time joyously conversing about Dhamma subjects with other like-minded inhabitants. They regularly attend the sermons given on Buddhist Holy Days. King Santatusit usually requests one of the Bodhisattas that have accumulated a vast amount of merit to give the sermons. The lifestyle in this celestial realm is superior to and more elaborate than the first three celestial realms. One day and night in this realm is equal to 400 earth years. The average lifespan in this realm is 4,000 celestial years.

5. The Nimmanarati Realm is the fifth level of the Celestial Realm. It is part of the Sense-Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. This celestial realm is situated above the Tusita Realm at a distance of about 42,000 leagues or 672,000 kilometers. It is called Nimmanarati because it is the sovereignty of King Sunimamit. Celestial beings in this realm possess a very high level of accumulated merit. They can create and alter their material possessions according to their heart's desire. This is one extraordinary aspect above and beyond the first four celestial realms where whatever material possessions come into existence at the time of their rebirth stays as they are and cannot be changed. The lifestyle in this celestial realm is superior to and more elaborate than the first four celestial realms. One day and night in this realm is equal to 800 earth years. The average lifespan in this realm is 8,000 celestial years.

6. The Paranimmitavasavatti Realm is the sixth and highest level of the Celestial Realm. It is part of the Sense-Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. This celestial realm is situated above the Nimmanarati Realm at a distance of about 42,000 leagues or 672,000 kilometers. It is called Paranimmitavasavatti because it is the sovereignty of King Paranimmitavasavatti. This celestial realm has one extraordinary aspect in that the celestial beings of this realm does not have to create or alter anything themselves. They have a retinue of attendants who knows exactly what their master or mistress desires and create it for him or her. These attendants come into existence as a result of each celestial being's accumulated merit. The lifestyle in this celestial realm is superior to and more elaborate than the rest of the celestial realms. One day and night in this realm is equal to 1,600 earth years. The average lifespan in this realm is 16,000 celestial years.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to describe the meaning, the location, the characteristics, the birth, the consumption of sensual pleasures, and the lifespan of the Catummaharajika Realm correctly.
2. To enable the student to describe the meaning, the location, the characteristics, the birth, the consumption of sensual pleasures, and the lifespan of the Tavatimsa Realm correctly.
3. To enable the student to describe the meaning, the location, the characteristics, the birth, the consumption of sensual pleasures, and the lifespan of the Yama Realm correctly.
4. To enable the student to describe the meaning, the location, the characteristics, the birth, the consumption of sensual pleasures, and the lifespan of the Tusita Realm correctly.
5. To enable the student to describe the meaning, the location, the characteristics, the birth, the consumption of sensual pleasures, and the lifespan of the Nimmanarati Realm correctly.
6. To enable the student to describe the meaning, the location, the characteristics, the birth, the consumption of sensual pleasures, and the lifespan of the Paranimmitavasavatti Realm correctly.



Journey to Celestial Realm

THE CELESTIAL REALM

Introduction

Life in Samsara is so long that one cannot find its beginning, its middle or its end. As long as we still harbor unwholesome attachments, we will continue to undergo the round of rebirth for eternity. Having studied about the unfortunate realms and the Human Realm, the student can now understand that the Human Realm is the place where one can perform deeds of the greatest merit or commit the gravest misdeeds. The unfortunate realms are places of retribution for all the unwholesome deeds an individual has accumulated physically, verbally, and mentally during his human existence. The forms of punishment are very cruel, horrific and the sentence lasts an eternity. In these unfortunate realms, there is absolutely no opportunity to perform any good deed. The Celestial Realm, which the student is about to learn, is the place of reward, of reaping the fruit of an individual's wholesome deeds during his human existence.

The Celestial Realm is a place where some people believe to be real and others do not. Those who disbelieve its reality understand it to be a myth made up for the purpose of encouraging people to do good deeds. Believers and unbelievers of the Celestial Realm's reality are prevalent in other religions as well. Although most religions teach about the reality of heaven, only Buddhism can provide evidence to confirm this reality. In one of the Lord Buddha's Teachings as recorded in the **Mahasihanada Sutta**, Buddha told His Chief Disciple, the Most Venerable Sariputra that:

He could tell through His pure celestial eye how one would fare in the Hereafter given his current decent deeds.

Before the student embarks upon the subject of the Celestial Realm, it needs to be first pointed out that we have available to us more details about the first two Celestial realms than others. The reason is these realms are closer to and have more to do with the Human Realm than others. For example, in the Catummaharajika Realm, some of its inhabitants live in a plane of existence parallel to the earth plane. They live in different districts with their own zones of government. The Tavatimsa Realm is also very much involved with the Human and the Catummaharajika Realms.

Therefore, all the events recorded in the Tripitaka or in important Buddhist Scriptures dealt mostly with celestial beings in the first two levels of the Celestial Realm. There is some mentioning of celestial beings in the higher realms, where they have their own forms of government and are quite different from those in the closely connected Catummaharajika and Tavatimsa Realms. This close connection encompasses the earth all the way up to the Tavatimsa Realm.

4.1 Preliminary Understanding

In this section, we will cover the basic details of the Celestial Realm such as its meaning, its characteristics, the cause of rebirth and the ceasing to be of celestial beings as well as merit-making endeavors that allow rebirth in a particular celestial realm. These details will allow the student to gain a better picture of the Celestial Realm.

4.1.1 The Meaning of the Celestial Realm

The Celestial Realm or Heaven is one of the States of Happiness. It belongs to the Sense-Sphere, which means that there is still consumption of sensual pleasures through the sight, taste, smell, sound, touch, and a mind-object. Those who are still attached to sensual pleasures must have their rebirth within the Sense-Sphere.

The Pali word for the Celestial Realm is ‘Devabhum’. The word ‘Deva’ means individuals that enjoy immensely the five sensual pleasures at the celestial level. There are three categories of celestial beings or ‘Devas’ as follows:

1. **Uppattidevas:** They are ‘Devas’ by birth or true Devas.
2. **Samatidevas:** They are ‘Devas’ by position and applies to human beings such as a king, a queen, a prince, a princess, etc.
3. **Visuddhidevas:** They are ‘Devas’ that are totally pure because they are devoid of defilements. This term applies to the Arahats (individuals that have attained Nibbana) only.

In this context, ‘Devas’ or individuals that enjoy immensely the five sensual pleasures at the celestial level apply specifically to the Uppattidevas.

The word ‘Bhum’ means the dwelling or the abode. Therefore, the combined term of ‘Devabhum’ means the dwelling of individuals that enjoy immensely the five sensual pleasures at the celestial level.

4.1.2 Location of the Celestial Realm

The Celestial Realm or ‘Devabhum’ is the dwelling of celestial beings. It is the plane of existence in which its inhabitants exude bright personal aura all the time. The cause of rebirth as a celestial being comes from the merit accumulated during the individual’s human existence. As soon as rebirth occurs, one is reborn in the form of a young adult. This mode of birth is called ‘Opapatika’ or ‘Spontaneous Rising’. There is no need for a mother’s womb or an egg. Rebirth in any particular celestial realm, the class and status, as well as the celestial endowments are all determined by the individual’s accumulated merit during his/her human existence.

There are altogether six celestial realms as follows:

- **The Catummaharajika Realm** is the first celestial level and is situated on the slopes of the Great Mount Sineru.
- **The Tavatimsa Realm** is the second celestial level and is situated on top of the Great Mount Sineru.
- **The Yama Realm** is the third celestial level and is situated in the air above the Tavatimsa Realm.
- **The Tusita Realm** is the fourth celestial level and is situated in the air above the Yama Realm.
- **The Nimmanarati Realm** is the fifth celestial level and is situated in the air above the Tusita Realm.
- **The Paranimmitavasavatti Realm** is the sixth celestial level and is situated in the air above the Nimmanarati Realm.

4.1.3 The Rebirth and the Ceasing-to-be of Celestial Beings

During an individual's human existence should he/she accumulate enough wholesome deeds, he/she will have his/her rebirth in the Celestial Realm. The amount of his/her accumulated merit determines which celestial realm he/she will be reborn in. With the exception of the Catummaharajika Realm, celestial beings obtain their rebirth by means of 'Spontaneous Rising'. It means that as soon as the rebirth takes place, an individual comes into existence as an adult. Male celestial beings assume the handsome form of an 18-20 year-old. Female celestial beings assume the beautiful form of a 16-18 year-old. They possess the form of a young adult with lasting good looks. They never age. Their teeth do not fall out; their hair does not turn gray. They possess a glowing complexion and exude a bright circular personal radiance about their person. Its radius ranges from two meters to 190 kilometers depending on each individual's level of accumulated merit.

The celestial castles are all exquisitely beautiful and grand. They are decorated and adorned with precious gems. They are of different sizes. All the household items are elaborate and provide superior creature comforts. Celestial food appears spontaneously. There is no need to earn a living. There is no need to cook. They are surrounded by a retinue of attendants. Their celestial apparel is exquisitely beautiful. There is no need for custom tailoring or dressmaking. There is no need to do laundry. The apparel appears spontaneously according to the celestial being's desire. Each celestial day is about all manners of pleasure and entertainment. They spend time visiting the great park or socializing with each other. The environment and the atmosphere provide only comforts and joy. There is no hot season, cold season, or rainy season. It is truly a realm of supreme happiness.

Despite such remarkable happiness, it is but temporary. The nature of this happy existence however long cannot last. This fact is the cause of trouble for all celestial

beings that live their lives recklessly. The reason is there is only one place that is devoid of trouble. That place is Nibbana. As long as the mind contains defilements, trouble is not far away. Celestial beings are not yet devoid of defilements. They are still controlled by their unwholesome attachments. However, their defilements are more contained than ours in the Human Realm. Although they experience no aging and no sickness, they must eventually die or cease to be. The only difference is their death occurs without any pain or suffering.

Celestial beings know about their impending death beforehand through their 'Puppanimita' or omens. The five signs or omens according to the **Cavamana Sutta** include:

- 1) the celestial flowers begin to wilt;
- 2) the celestial apparel appears dingy;
- 3) perspiration begins to appear in the armpits;
- 4) the once glowing complexion turns dull; and
- 5) the feeling of pleasure turns to boredom.

The Sutta indicates that when the omens appear, they begin with the wilting of the flowers that are used to decorate the celestial being's apparel. That is, they wilt and their beauty is gone. It is like leaving them out to dry under the sun. Next, the apparel that used to be of vibrant colors begins to fade. When a celestial being notices these signs, he will feel very sad and troubled. The sad and troubled feelings cause the celestial being to perspire. Normally, celestial beings do not perspire at all. Their bodies are typically clean and neat like a flawless gemstone. When they have spent all of their accumulated merit, perspiration will not only appear in the armpits, but the sweat of impending death will appear all over the body. They will begin to feel the weights of their bodies and their jeweled adornments.

When the five signs or omens start to appear, the celestial being will begin to notice the changes in him. His personal radiance becomes dimmer. He begins to grow tired of the Celestial Realm altogether. He no longer takes any delight in his celestial couch. He finds no pleasure in his retinue of female attendants. It is like a gravely ill person that cannot find pleasure in anything. He grows tired of all the forms of entertainment and the music.

Normally, the signs of one's impending death appear throughout the period of seven celestial days. When the signs become more obvious, the celestial being will experience sorrow and anxiety because he laments having to leave his celestial endowments. Some celestial beings cannot deal with their sorrow and go around whining and carrying on about it. Others may not display any emotion outwardly but his heart is filled with anxiety and cannot stop from feeling troubled.

The omens can be witnessed by the self and other celestial beings. If he is a high-ranking celestial being, he will hide within his celestial castle and does not dare let any celestial being see him. At the end of the seven celestial days, the celestial being will simply cease to be. The destination of his next rebirth depends on his overall Kamma accumulated during his human existence.

Celestial beings of vast amount merit that have not been reckless at all, they will not be fearful when they know about their impending death. They are always prepared for

their rebirth because they have accumulated so much merit during their previous human existence by giving generously and by observing the Precepts meticulously. In the Celestial Realm, they have not idled away their time by being immersed in all forms of entertainment and pleasure like most celestial beings. They are confident that after they cease to be, they will have their rebirth in a more elevated realm of existence. Or they will be reborn in the Human Realm in a noble family that practices the 'Right View'. When the omens appear, they will travel to the celestial park named 'Nandavan' where there are special celestial couches for those celestial beings about to cease to be. All the celestial friends that know about their impending death will come and wish them a happy rebirth in a realm of happiness.

Celestial birth and death are common occurrences. Regardless of how blissful their lives may be, they must still cease to be when their time is up. They must leave their state of great happiness. Yet, there are plenty of celestial beings that live their lives recklessly. They are ignorant of the truth about life and pass their time being immersed in all forms of entertainment and pleasure made possible by their celestial wealth that unfortunately cannot last. When death approaches, they become grief-stricken. They can only whine and carry on. This example should help us not to live our life recklessly. Rather, we need to accumulate as many good deeds as possible. We must discipline our self and follow the path of Nibbana.

4.1.4 The Origin of Celestial Beings' Names

On earth we have first and last names. We have names for animals and things so that our communication is made easier and less confusing. There is no hard and fast rule where naming is concerned. Some people go by their birth day, month, and year. Some people go by their birth place. Some people go by convenience. Celestial beings have such an easy and comfortable life. They do not have to work for a living the way we do. Their attendants, their celestial castle, and their celestial possessions all happen as a result of their accumulated merit. Even their names come from at least 5 different sources as follows:

1. The name comes from what the individual was called during his human existence. For example, a man named 'Magha' invited his 32 friends to help him build pavilions, roads, and bridges as social aid. When he died and was reborn as the sovereign of the Tavatimsa Realm, his name became 'Maghavan'.

2. The name comes from a particular form of the individual's decent conduct during his human existence. For example, one male celestial being's name is 'Khantika', a Pali word for 'forbearance'. As a human being, he used to practice forbearance all of his life through all of his trials and tribulations. After he died and became a celestial being, he was then called 'Khantika Deva'.

3. The name comes from a particular offering made to the Sangha during the individual's human existence. For example, in the time of our Lord Buddha, a woman brought an offering of popped rice to the senior monk 'Mahakassapa'. She was bitten by a poisonous snake after having made the offering and died. When she had her rebirth in the Celestial Realm, her celestial castle was decorated with precious gems the shape of popped rice. Her name became 'Lajadhida' which means the female Deva of

popped rice. Another example involves a male celestial being named 'Padumachatarā'. During his human existence, he regularly worshiped at a Cetiya with lotuses. When he was reborn as a celestial being, he has over him at all times a celestial lotus flower that serves as an elaborate umbrella.

4. The name comes from a special merit made during the individual's human existence. It may be an extraordinary donation. For example, the individual might have donated a vehicle to the Buddhist monks that practiced righteousness. When he died and was reborn in the Celestial Realm, he possesses an unusually large and elaborate celestial vehicle, which he uses to transport himself and his attendants to the celestial assembly hall. His celestial name means 'transportation'.

5. The name comes from the individual's position. For example, the celestial being with the largest amount of accumulated merit in the Tavatimsa Realm is called 'Indra'. Likewise, in the Yama Realm, its sovereign is called 'King Suyama'.

4.1.5 Gradations of Human Beings' Good Deeds

Rebirth in the Celestial Realm can occur only when during the individual's human existence, he has regularly performed good deeds, accumulated merit, pursued Perfections, given generously, observed the Precepts, practiced meditation, etc. The reward of these good deeds will be reaped in the Celestial Realm. As a celestial being, he will possess refined and elaborate celestial wealth. He will exude a personal radiance the brightness of which depends on the reason behind the performance of his good deeds. There are four reasons as follows:

1. The individual performs good deeds out of fear. That is, the individual performs good deeds just in case there really is a hell realm. This reason does not allow him/her to do his/her best in terms of accumulating his/her good deeds. This mentality can be compared to a kindergartener that behaves himself because he is afraid of his teacher. This mentality will only allow the individual to have a rebirth as a 'Bhummadeva' or earth sprite, a 'Rukkhadeva' or wood nymph, an 'Akasadeva' or sylph.

2. The individual performs good deeds and expects something in return. That is, whenever the individual performs a good deed, he/she watches for gains or rewards that will come as a result. This mentality can be compared to a child that helps his parents out because he expects them to give him a special allowance in return for his help. When he dies, he will not obtain a higher rebirth than the Catummaharajika Realm.

3. The individual performs good deeds out of one's need for praise. That is, the individual needs to be praised before he/she is motivated to perform good deeds. This mentality can be compared to someone that does certain good deeds to earn the admiration of those around him. When he dies, he will not obtain a higher rebirth than the Catummaharajika Realm.

4. The individual performs good deeds for goodness' sake. That is, the individual knows that good deeds should be performed. Whether he/she receives anything in return or not, whether he/she is praised or not for the deed, he/she still does it because

he/she believes in the performance of good deeds. This mentality can be compared to a college student that sees the benefit of good deeds and performs them as a matter of course. When he/she dies, he/she will obtain a rebirth in the Tavatimsa or a higher realm depending on the state of his/her mind during the performance of the good deeds.

4.1.6 Rebirth in Any Particular Celestial Realm Is Determined by the Characteristics of the Merit-Making Activities

The benefit derived from each individual's performance of good deeds differs according to his/her belief and intellect. If one truly believes in merit and demerit, one can accumulate deeds of merit with deep joy. In this sense, one earns much more merit than someone that performs these deeds according to convention or someone that performs them and expects something in return. Here, the student will learn about the characteristics of merit-making activities that determine one's rebirth in a particular celestial realm as recorded in the 'Dana Sutta' as abbreviated below.

Rebirth in the Catummaharajika Realm is determined by different causes. During the individual's human existence, he/she may not have understood the basic principle of merit-making, hence does not accumulate much merit. He may have given to charity causes once in a while or in small amounts. When the merit made is small or one does something good and expects something in return, the merit earned will be impure and imperfect. Such individual can be said to possess unwholesomeness as well as merit but the level of merit tips the balance in his favor and causes him to spend his hereafter in this celestial realm.

Rebirth in the Tavatimsa Realm comes from the fact that during the individual's human existence, he has accumulated merit because he understands it to be a decent and proper thing to do. He not only accumulates merit but also practices the Celestial Virtues, which include being ashamed of sin (Hiri) and being fearful of its consequences (Ottappa). These wholesome virtues practiced regularly cause the practitioner to spend his hereafter in this celestial realm.

Rebirth in the Yama Realm comes from the desire to follow in the forefather's traditional practices. For example, the individual may have witnessed his grandparents contributing to the building of a consecrated assembly hall, supporting the temple, contributing to the casting of the Buddha Image, etc., so he follows in his grandparents' footsteps. Or he becomes ordained as a Buddhist monk for the purpose of continuing the Buddhist Faith. When he dies, he will most likely spend his hereafter in this celestial realm.

Rebirth in the Tusita Realm comes from the desire to make this world a better place for everyone. These individuals do not make merit just for merit's sake but for the sake of the world and of their fellow human beings. Their wholesome and noble ideal along with their vast amount of accumulated merit enable them to spend their hereafter in this celestial realm.

Rebirth in the Nimmanarati Realm comes from the fact that during the individual's human existence, he has witnessed how others receive admiration and encouragement as a result of their great merit-making endeavors. As a result, he is determined to

follow these fine examples. These wholesome deeds of merit cause him to spend the Hereafter in this celestial realm.

Rebirth in the Paranimitavasavatti Realm comes from the fact that during the individual's human existence, he has made merit with devotion, respect, and joy. After he dies, he will be reborn in this celestial realm.

4.1.7 Requirements for Rebirth in the Celestial Realm.

The topics covered so far are about the manners in which wholesome deeds can be performed in order to gain a rebirth in the Celestial Realm. What have not been mentioned yet are the types of wholesome deeds necessary for rebirth in each of the celestial realms. These details will be covered here to enable the student to understand and practice accordingly.

The '**Punnakiriyavatthu Sutta**' (the Ways of Making Merit) states:

Practices that lead to rebirth in the Celestial Realm. These include the giving of alms, the observation of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation. The Lord Buddha taught that generosity, decent conduct, and kindness provide happiness in the present and allow the practitioner to be reborn in the Celestial Realm.

From the Sutta, it is clear how one should behave in terms of the practice of generosity through the giving of alms, the practice of decent conduct through the observation of the Precepts, and the practice of kindness through meditation. These three practices allow the practitioner to have a rebirth in the Celestial Realm. Details of these practices have already been presented in Chapter 1 and will not be repeated here. What is important is for the student to practice these three virtues on a regular basis until they become a habit. While one still harbors defilements and has to undergo the ceaseless round of rebirth, at least these habitual practices will allow one to be reborn in the States of Happiness.

4.2 The Catummaharajika Realm

The Catummaharajika Realm is the first level of the Celestial Realm, which is part of the Sense Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. Out of the six celestial levels, the Catummaharajika Realm contains the most diversity and its location is nearest to the Human Realm. Moreover, some of its territories spill over to the earth plane. From the Jataka (the stories of the Lord Buddha's previous lives) as recorded in the Tripitaka, we learn that originally the Human Realm and the Catummaharajika Realm were connected through the celestial forest of Himavanta. This celestial forest is the dwelling of a great number of celestial beings of different races. As time passed and with the increase of human beings' defilements, this connection has been lost.

So far the student has learnt that individuals that have a rebirth in the Catummaharajika Realm are those that used to make merit as well as commit unwholesome deeds during their human existence. Before they died, they were able to recall their merit. This type of individuals abounds on earth and their subsequent rebirths populate this celestial realm of diversity.

4.2.1 The Meaning of ‘Catummaharajika’

The word ‘Catumaharaja’ means the four great kings. Hence, the Catummaharajika Realm is a place where all of its celestial subjects serve these four great kings. The realm is under their sovereignty and the celestial subjects under their sovereign rule.

4.2.2 Location and Characteristics of the Catummaharajika Realm

This celestial realm is situated on the slope of the Great Mount Sineru. It is nearest to the Human Realm and is under the sovereign rule of the Tavatimsa Realm. These four kings govern the Catummaharajika Realm the territories of which spread to the Human Realm. In addition, they look after and protect the Four Human Continents. Therefore, they are also referred to as ‘King Catulokabala’.

This celestial realm is divided into four areas, each with its own king and capital city. The cities are full of elaborate amenities. There are bright gold walls everywhere studded with seven kinds of precious gems. Gates are made of precious stones. The city contains opulent castles that rise up above and behind the city wall. Within the vast metropolis, there are a large number of celestial residences which are castles made of clear crystal (diamond). The ground is made of gold or silver. Unlike precious stones and metals on earth, celestial gems and metals are smooth and soft. When celestial beings walk on the ground made of gold or silver, it shows no footprints. There are also gigantic lotus ponds with water clearer than crystal, filled with all kinds of water lilies that exude a pervasive scent. Celestial trees are full of splendor. Celestial flowers are beautiful beyond description. The city contains grand residences belonging to high-class celestial beings.

Middle-class celestial beings dwell in the celestial forest of Himavanta, which is like the national park of the realm. The forest contains magnificent trees and flowers. When a tree sheds a leaf, it will disappear instantly. The leaves do not accumulate like they do here on earth. Celestial flowers exude pervasive lovely fragrances. As soon as one wilts and drops, another one grows in its place. The climate is perfectly comfortable and does not change. It’s neither too hot nor too cold. Each year trees will flower for one, two, or three months. The celestial forest contains 84,000 mountains, five great rivers called the Konka, the Yamuna, the Sarabhu, the Aciravadi, and the Mahima. It contains seven great lakes called Lake Anodat, Lake Kannamunda, Lake Rathakala, Lake Chaddanta, Lake Mandakini, Lake Sihapapata, and Lake Kunala. Lake Anodat is surrounded by 5 mountain ranges named Sudassana, Citrakut, Kalakut, Krailas, and Gandhamad. Mount Gandhamad contains an overhang called ‘Nandamulaka’ which houses three caves called the Gold Cave, the Crystal Cave, and the Silver Cave. These caves are the dwelling of the Paccekabuddhas (Silent Buddhas).

The Himavanta Forest is the dwelling of middle-class celestial beings namely the Garudas, the Yakkhas, the Nagas, the Celestial Musicians, the Sorcerers and Sorceresses, and many types of amazing animals. The animals here are very beautiful. They are like the original prototypes of all animals. There are many exotic animals such as Kinnaras, Kinnaris, Tinnarajasihās, Kalarajasihās, Pandhurajasihās, Kraisararajasihās, and Gajasihās. There are ‘Makkalipala’ trees that produce fruits in the form of a woman and are the objects of desire of the celestial residents of the Himavanta Forest such as the Sorcerers, the Celestial Musicians, etc.

This ‘**Makkalipala**’ or ‘**Naripala**’ (the word Nari means woman, the word pala means fruit) tree appears among other trees and is distributed all over the Forest, which surrounds the Great Mount Sineru. The ‘Makkalipala’ trees do not grow in group. Its trunk is the color of brown gold and glitters beautifully. Its leaves the color of gold, they glisten beautifully with their own radiance. When any leaf falls to the ground, it disappears instantly. The trees do not need to be watered. The ground around them need not be pruned or fertilized. They do not need any trimming. When it is the right season, they will flower and produce abundant ‘Nari’ fruits that hang from the tree. If it is not yet the season, the tree will be covered with leaves. It flowers only once a year, the flowering process takes three months. The flowers bloom for 1 month, turn into the ‘Nari’ fruit for 1 month, and it takes another month for the fruit to ripen and fall off. The fruit can be used only after it falls off the tree. The fruits do not all ripen and fall off at the same time. They take turn to ripen within the period of 1 month. Once they fall off, they will live for only 7 celestial days which are equal to 350 earth years. All the Celestial Musicians, the Sorcerers, will compete for the fruits as they ripen.

Examples of Amazing Animals in the Himavanta Forest

Gajasihās: They have an elephant head and a Rajasiha (celestial lion) body. They are very graceful and beautiful. They result from the cross-breeding of the elephant and the Rajasiha.

Nagarajasihās: They have a Phya Naga (celestial serpent) head, a Rajasiha body, and a Naga tail. They have scales like the Phya Naga. They are bold, graceful, and beautiful. They result from the cross-breeding of the Phya Naga and the Rajasiha.

Kraisararajasihās: They are the king of all the celestial animals in the Himavanta Forest. The body has white hair but its end is red. If viewed from the front the hair appears red. Each hair folds upon itself in a clockwise fashion and the folds form strands along the back. Its hair is not disheveled like the hair on lion on earth. They are very graceful and beautiful. They kill celestial elephants for food.

We have now covered the dwelling of high- and middle-class celestial beings of the Catummaharajika Realm. Low-class celestial beings are diverse. Some live among their own kind like the lower class Garudas, Nagas, Yakkhas, Celestial Musicians, Sorcerers, Kumpana (officials in the Hell of Yomalok), etc. Some groups share a similar lifestyle as human beings on earth. Their celestial residences look like houses on earth, for example, because these celestial beings possess a small amount of accumulated merit.

In addition, there are low-class celestial beings that live in celestial houses on a plane of existence parallel to earth. They can be categorized according to the characteristics of their dwelling as follows:

Bhummadeva (Earth Sprite): These celestial beings live on the earth-floor in termite mounds, along the hills, underground, in the mountains, in the river, in houses, in Cetiya, in pavilions, at the gates, etc. Some earth sprites have their own celestial houses, some do not and have to live with others that do.

Rukhadewa (Wood Nymph): These celestial beings live on tree branches and on treetops in their own celestial houses or with others. Their dwelling is located higher than the earth sprites’.

Akasadeva (Sylph or Air Sprite): These celestial beings have their castles up in the air about 16 kilometers above the ground.

These celestial beings are under the sovereignty of the four great kings (Catummaharaja). Their dwelling is in a plane of existence parallel to earth. Sometimes, we can see their refined physical forms or ghosts with our naked eyes.

The word ‘ghost’ has a wide meaning. It means a refined physical form, which is not normally visible to naked human eyes. These refined physical forms belong to those that live among human beings and include Sambhavesi (disembodied spirit), Bhummadevas, etc. Some of these Bhummadevas belong to the Yakkha-race; some belong to the Sorcerer-race; and others belong to the Celestial Musician-race. We have heard of ghouls in the northeastern part of Thailand. Ghouls are Bhummadevas of the Yakkha-race. They are under the sovereign rule of King Vessuvan. They can take over a human being’s body in order to feed but they cannot do this to everyone. They can only take possession of individuals that have a past evil Kamma of having killed animals as sacrifice to their deity.

Once we have studied about the lives of these refined physical forms, we will understand them better and our fear of them would decrease to the point where none will be left at all. These beings are former human beings that accumulated scant merit. They are fearful of those possessing a higher amount of merit.

4.2.3 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Catummaharajika Realm.

The lifespan of celestial beings in this celestial realm is given in the ‘**Vitathata Sutta**’.

On average, celestial beings in this realm live to be 500 celestial years. One celestial day and night is equal to fifty earth years. One celestial month contains 30 celestial nights and one celestial year contains 12 months. Therefore, 500 celestial years in the Catummaharajika Realm are equal to 9 million earth years.

Not all celestial beings live to be 500 celestial years; it depends on their overall merit. It is in the same way that the average lifespan of human beings nowadays is 75 years but not all live to be 75 years old.

4.2.4 The Birth and the Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Catummaharajika Realm.

The Catummaharajika Realm belongs to the Sense-Sphere. Beings in this realm consume sensual pleasures just like human beings do but in a more refined manner. Consumption of sensual pleasures is uniquely different to each celestial realm but celestial beings in the Catummaharajika Realm have the most in common with human beings.

Celestial beings can come into existence by four different modes as follows:

- **Opatatika** or **Spontaneous Rising**: This birth mode has no need for parents. The being assumes an adult form as soon as it comes into existence. This birth mode applies to high-class celestial beings.
- **Sansedaja**: This birth mode requires perspiration and moisture, and applies to the Garudas, the Nagas, and the Yakkhas.
- **Jalabuja** or **the Womb**: This birth mode requires a mother's womb. Beings of this birth mode live in families and couples have sexual intercourse the way human beings do. They have deviant sexual behaviors just like human beings do. They have three sexual types which include male, female and neither male nor female.
- **Andaja** or **the Egg**: This birth mode starts with an egg and hatches into a being and applies to the Garudas, the Nagas, etc.

Each being's birth mode depends on his overall merit. A high level of merit causes the Opatatika birth mode. They are born as adults. A lower level of merit causes the Sansadaja birth mode. An even lower level of merit causes the Jalabuja birth mode. The lowest level of merit causes the Andaja birth mode.

4.2.5 The Government of the Catummaharajika Realm

The current four kings of this celestial realm are Buddhists. They take the Triple Gem as their refuge. These kings govern their celestial realms as well as the four Human Continents. There are four lines of governing in accordance to the four major races in this realm. The type of government is not democracy but meritocracy, which means individuals of higher merit levels rule over those of lower merit levels. Details of the government in this celestial realm are as follows:

1. King Dhataratha governs the eastern part of the realm. He is responsible for three categories of celestial beings which include the Celestial Musicians, the Sorcerers and Sorceresses, and the Kumbhanda (Officials of the Hell of Yomalok).

Celestial Musicians are celestial beings that come into existence among the ten anatomical parts of the scented tree. These include the root, the core, the woody part, the bark, the scent, the trunk, the flower, the fruit, and the tuber. There are three classes of Celestial Musicians, high, middle, and low classes.

High-class Celestial Musicians such as the Pancasikkhas have celestial castles in the Catummaharajika Realm. They have female celestial attendants in their castles.

Middle-class Celestial Musicians are born in the Himavanta Forest. Their houses are inside the trees. They serve the high-class Celestial Musicians. Low-class Celestial Musicians dwell on earth as wood nymphs. Some wood nymphs live in family groups and some do not. They haunt certain types of scented trees such as the Hopea tree.

Celestial Musicians are especially gifted in the areas of music, play-acting, dancing, the various art forms and literature. Whenever there is an assembly of celestial beings, it is these Celestial Musicians that entertain them. During their human existence, their accumulated merit has been tainted with sensual pleasures. This causes them to be reborn as Celestial Musicians.

Sorcerers and Sorceresses are the keepers of academic knowledge such as the 18 Arts, medical science, astrology, and the sciences. The sorcerers possess supernormal powers. They can fly; they can cast spells, etc. They come in different sizes and shapes. Some live alone, some in a group, some have partners, and some do not. They include yogis, ascetics, etc. Some are very much like human beings.

Kumbhands are strange looking beings. Their faces look bloated but they are not as fierce looking as the Yakkhas. They have no tusks. Their hair is in tight curls. Their skin is very dark. Their stomach is huge and protruding. Each testicle is the size of a pot. There are different classes of Kumbhands. They are responsible for inflicting all forms of punishment on the hell beings in the Hell of Yomalok.

2. King Virulahaka governs the southern part of the Catummaharajika Realm. He is responsible for the Garudas. The cause of rebirth as a Garuda is the habit of making merit with prideful arrogance during the individual's human existence.

3. King Virupaksa governs the western part of the Catummaharajika Realm. He is responsible for the Nagas. The cause of rebirth as a Naga is the habit of making merit with prideful arrogance during the individual's human existence.

Phya Naga is the king of snakes and is considered an animal because their body is parallel to the ground, hence they cannot attain enlightenment while they assume the form of a Phya Naga. They are animals belonging to the States of Happiness, however. The Nagas can be divided into four major families: **1) The Virupaksa Family:** it consists of golden-colored Phya Nagas; **2) The Aerapatha Family:** it consists of green-colored Phya Nagas; **3) The Chabbayaputta Family:** it consists of rainbow colored Phya Nagas; and **4) The Kanthagotama Family:** it consists of black-colored Phya Nagas.

Phya Nagas can assume all four modes of birth, which include Opatika: rising spontaneously in an adult form; Sansedaja: arises from perspiration or moisture;

Jalabuja: born from the womb; and Andaja: born from the egg. The high or ruling class Phya Nagas assumes an Opatatika birth. Phya Nagas dwell in a plane of existence parallel to earth in the river, in the lake, in the canal, in the pond, in the air, and all the way up to the Catummaharajika Realm.

4. King Vessuvan or Kuvera governs the northern part of the Catummaharajika Realm. He is responsible for the Yakkhas. The cause for rebirth as a Yakkha is the habit of being easily annoyed during the individual's human existence. As a result, the individual often makes merit in anger as well.

Yakkhas are beings worshipped by some human beings or they contrive to make human beings worship them. Yakkhas can be divided into three main classes: high, middle, and low classes. They possess different levels of refinement depending on their overall merit. High-class Yakkhas possess a gold castle. Both the male and female Yakkhas possess good looks. They are adorned with precious gems and exude a personal radiance but their complexion is very dark but smooth. Their complexion may be greenish black, yellowish black, reddish black, etc. They have celestial food and attendants. It is only when they are angry that their tusks will appear.

Low-class Yakkhas with a low level of merit are hideous. Their hair is fizzy, their body is very dark, their eyes are protruding, their complexion is as rough as sandpaper, and they have a fierce temper. The shape varies. Some are stout. Some are fat and muscular. Some are tall. Some are short. Their body hair also varies; it can be short, long, or sticky. The hair on the head can be straight, long, or disheveled. Some are bald. Their eyes can be protruding, staring, red, rolling upward, crossed, or blind.

Yakkhas assume three different birth modes, which include Opatatika or spontaneous rising, Jalabuja or being born from the womb, and sansedaja or being born from moisture. Their dwelling includes caves, mountains, in the water, underneath the ground, on the ground, in the air. The high class Yakkhas live in castles in the Catummaharajika Realm on the slope of the Great Mount Sineru.

The government of this celestial realm is divided into districts like we do on earth. The districts change according to the change occurring on the earth surface. The purpose of division into districts is to ensure the well-being of all in the community because they still possess defilements. Moreover, celestial beings of this realm possess a lower level of merit than their counterparts in the higher realms and they can easily exploit each other. Yakkhas govern themselves from the slope of the Great Mount Sineru all the way to the Sylphs, the wood nymphs, the earth sprites on the earth plane. The system of government ensures that they do not fight with or exploit each other. They are not to exploit human beings but to protect them. They are not to exploit each other nor are they to exploit beings of others races, which include the Garudas, the Nagas, and the Celestial Musicians. They are to live in peace together. The four great kings have regular meetings to discuss matters of government in order to ensure the well-being of all those under their sovereignties. The four kings love and support one another. They have advisors, ministers, and army generals to help with the government in the same way that we do on earth.

In regards to the government of celestial beings on the earth plane, any part of the earth that is governed by a high-ranking celestial being of high merit, tremendous celestial

wealth and a bright radiance, the area of the earth under his government will be civilized and developed. Any part of the earth under the government of a medium-ranking celestial being will be less developed. If the area is governed by a low-ranking celestial being with a lower level of merit, it will be undeveloped or primitive. There are gradations in the ruling class. One of their foremost responsibilities is to protect human beings from the exploitation of non-humans such as disembodied spirits, wood nymphs, and Yakkhas. These beings possess very low level of merit and cannot think for themselves. Any area where human beings accumulate a great deal of merit, these ruling celestial beings will come down to take care of and protect it so that human beings living under their jurisdiction should meet with increasing prosperity. In this sense and where individual prosperity is concerned, celestial beings play a supporting role whereas the overall merit in each human being plays a major role.

4.3 The Tavatimsa Realm

This is the second celestial realm of the Sense Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. Within the Buddhist community on earth, this celestial realm is the most well-known because of its close connection to the Human Realm. Its current sovereign is a Buddhist and is very well known among the Buddhists. He is called King Sakka or Indra.

When one studies the Tripitaka, one will find that King Sakka or Indra plays an important role in governing the celestial beings of the Tavatimsa Realm and in facilitating the Bodhisattas' pursuit of perfections all through the ages. His virtue has been discussed within the Buddhist community for a long, long time. There are so many interesting details about the realm that warrant our study. The Lord Buddha talked a great deal about this celestial realm as recorded in the Tripitaka. There are stories about the Lord Buddha's disciples' visits and their conversations with certain celestial beings regarding their accumulated merit, which endows them with tremendous celestial wealth.

Here, the student will have the opportunity to learn more about these celestial beings and appreciate the joy and pleasure of their lifestyle, a lifestyle made possible by their merit, which had been accumulated during their human existence.

4.3.1 The Meaning of 'Tavatimsa'

The word 'Tavatimsa' has two meanings. The first meaning is 'the birthplace of 33 individuals', which include Indra and 32 high-ranking celestial beings. Another meaning is 'the first appearance of land' because it is situated on top of the Great Mount Sineru.

It can be said that the Tavatimsa Realm is the realm of 33 high-ranking celestial beings.

4.3.2 Location and Characteristics of the Tavatimsa Realm

As mentioned earlier, the Tavatimsa Realm is the realm of 33 kings and the head king is King Sakka or Indra. He has other aliases such as King Kosiamarindra, King

Sahassanai or the king with a thousand eyes. The reason is King Sakka is blessed with a great celestial eye. He can see clearly far and wide over a great distance. It is as though he has a thousand eyes. He is responsible for the government of the Tavatimsa as well as the Catummaharajika Realms. The Tavatimsa Realm is located on top of the Great Mount Sineru. This realm used to be the dwelling of the Asura king. During King Sakka's human existence, he was a wealthy man by the name of 'Magha'. He has performed only wholesome deeds. He also talked his 32 friends into performing wholesome, beneficial deeds by giving to social aid such as funding the building of pavilions, roadways, etc. Moreover, 'Magha' has performed all seven categories of wholesome deeds. These include taking care of his aging parents, being respectful to his elders, practicing kind and endearing speech, abandoning divisive speech, abandoning miserliness, practicing honesty, being slow to anger. After 'Magha' and his 32 friends died, they had a rebirth in the Tavatimsa Realm. They waged a battle against the Asura king and won, forcing the Asura king to take up a new abode beneath the Great Mount Sineru.

The Tavatimsa Realm is divided into four major areas. In the middle are the magnificent celestial residences of Indra and his 32 friends. The area is called the celestial city of '**Sutassana**' and forms the center of this celestial realm. Indra's 'Vejayanta Castle' is the very center of the realm. The government is divided into three major districts. The first major district encompasses the area surrounding the 'Vejayanta Castle'. This vast area is further divided into 8 minor districts. The second major district covers an area surrounding the first major district and is further divided into 10 minor districts. The most outer major district is divided into 14 minor districts. The total number of minor districts is 32 which is the same as the number of Indra's friends.

The student will now learn the details of the mega celestial city of 'Sutassana'. It lies at the center of the Tavatimsa Realm. It is huge and vast and filled with magnificent celestial castles made of clear crystal (diamond). The mega city is surrounded by a city wall made of crystal. Since the mega city is about 160,000 kilometers wide and 160,000 kilometers long, the city wall contains 1,000 entrances. Each of the entrances contains a magnificent spire. Each time a gate opens, beautiful, resonant celestial music can be heard.

The Vejayanta Castle is 16,000 kilometers high. It is beautiful and grand beyond description. It is decorated with 7 types of precious gems. There are magnificent celestial parks and lotus ponds. At the top of the celestial castle, which is about 112 kilometers high all covered with precious gems, is decorated with multi-colored flags. Each flag is 48 kilometers in height. If the edge of the flag is made of clear crystal then the flag is made of glittering gold. If the edge is made of pink-colored gem then the flag is made of pearl-colored gem. If the edge is made of seven kinds of gems, the flag is also made of seven kinds of gems.

Outside Indra's vast and magnificent Vejayanta Castle, there are many celestial parks.

To the east, there is a huge celestial park called **Citralada**. It is the most beautiful of all the celestial parks in this realm. It covers an area about 8,000 kilometers wide and 8,000 kilometers long. There are two great lotus ponds named 'Citra' and 'Culacitra'. Its name stems from the fact that it contains a superior vine called 'Asavadi'. This

particular vine only flowers once in a thousand years and it bears only one fruit. Its fruit exudes a most marvelous scent not unlike that of the celestial 'Parijata' flower, which blooms every 100 years. This is a favorite vine of the celestial beings. They wait and watch for its fruit.

To the west, there is a celestial park called '**Nandavan**'. It contains two great lotus ponds called 'Mahananda' and 'Julananda'. It contains couches for high-ranking celestial beings to rest on when they are ready to cease to be. When signs of their ceasing-to-be appear to them, these celestial beings will come to the park and prepare for the inevitable event. Their celestial friends will come by to wish them a happy rebirth.

In addition, the 'Nandavan' park is the source of the great celestial 'Mondarb' flowers. These magnificent blooms fall to earth as a sign of worship to the Lord Buddha's during His auspicious entrance to Nibbana. The Mondarb flowers are golden yellow and exude a glorious radiance. Its petal is the size of a royal canopy. Its stigma and stamen are of the size of half a coconut shell. In between the two ponds is a park. The parks and the ponds alternate in a beautiful, orderly fashion. The size of the park varies but mostly it is about 8,000 kilometers wide.

To the north, there is a celestial park called '**Misakavan**'. It contains two great lotus ponds called 'Sudhamma' and 'Dhamma'.

To the south, there is a celestial park called '**Parusakavan**'. It is the largest park in the southern direction and contains two great lotus ponds called 'Bhadda', and 'Subhadda'.

To the northwest, in between the 'Misakavan' and 'Nandavan' parks, there is a great lotus pond called '**Patumvan**', which is very beautiful. On Buddhist Holy Days celestial beings enjoy going there to pick the lotuses and worship the 'Culamani Cetiya' with them.

To the southwest, in between the 'Nandavan' and the 'Parusakavan' parks, there is a great lotus pond called '**Ubalavan**'. It is a beautiful and famous pond.

To the southeast, in between the 'Parusakavan' and the 'Citalada' parks, there is a great pond called '**Nilubalavan**'. It is a pond filled with green lotuses. This is where the '**Culamani Cetiya**' is located. It is the celestial beings' sacred place for merit-making. They regularly make their merit by worshiping the sacred Cetiya with beautiful flowers. They have no other means of accumulating merit once they become celestial beings. Most of the celestial beings in the Tavatimsa Realm are now Buddhists. During their human existence, some of them might have subscribed to different beliefs as a result of their ignorance. However, once they are reborn in the Celestial Realm, they will automatically know that contributions made to the Buddhist Cause is the greatest way to earn merit.

To the northeast, in between the 'Misakavan' and 'Citalada' parks, there is a great lotus pond called 'Pundarikavan'. It is filled with white lotuses. The '**Parichatra**' tree grows here. Beneath this great tree is Indra's famed celestial couch. It is called '**Budukambala**'. This area is the location of the '**Sudhamma Assembly Hall**',

which is the meeting place of celestial beings. Next to it is a great clear pond and the forest of 'Mahavan'. Within this vast area, there are a thousand castles to accommodate Indra and other high-ranking celestial beings during their visit to the park.

4.3.3 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Tavatimsa Realm

The detail about their lifespan was recorded in the **Vitathata Sutta**.

One night and day in the Tavatimsa Realm is equal to 100 earth years.

There are 30 celestial nights in one celestial month and 12 celestial months in one celestial year.

From this Sutta, we learn that the lifespan of celestial beings in this realm is 1,000 celestial years or 36 million earth years. It is twice that of celestial beings in the Catummaharajika Realm.

4.3.4 The Birth and the Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Tavatimsa Realm

Once a human being dies and his power of merit causes him to have a rebirth in the Tavatimsa Realm, he will assume an 'Opatatika' birth mode. At the point of rebirth, one will turn into either a most handsome 18-20 year-old gentleman celestial being or a most beautiful 16-18 year-old lady celestial being.

The consumption of sensual pleasures of celestial beings in the Tavatimsa Realm is very much like us. Unlike the Catummaharajika Realm however, bizarre forms of sexual intercourse do not happen in the Tavatimsa Realm. In this realm, there is no pregnancy or birth from the womb. No other birth modes occur in this celestial realm except for Opatatika.

4.3.5 Romantic Life of Celestial Beings in the Tavatimsa Realm

Here the student will learn about the romantic life of celestial beings in the Tavatimsa Realm, which is highly interesting.

When a human being leaves the earth to be reborn as a gentleman or lady celestial being, rebirth occurs in several manners. One can wake up in the middle of the celestial castle either in the sitting or lying down position. One can follow a path of brightness or one can be escorted to the celestial realm in a celestial vehicle. In general, most celestial beings possess their own celestial castles. But there are some celestial beings whose overall merit is not enough to provide them with their own celestial castles. In that case, they will need to find accommodation in another celestial being's residence. If one has a rebirth on the celestial bed, one will become the castle owner's wife or mistress. If one has a rebirth near the celestial bed, one will become

the castle owner's butler and looks after the master's adornments and clothes. If one has a rebirth within the estate, one will become the castle owner's attendant.

Rebirth as the castle owner's son can occur only if they have accumulated a lot of merit together during their human existence and have expressed a special wish to dwell with each other in the Hereafter. In this case, one will have a rebirth with one's head resting on the castle owner's lap. If the castle owner is a lady, then she becomes a celestial mother. Should two rebirths occur at the same time, the master or mistress of the castle will have two celestial beings' heads resting on each side of his/her lap. As soon as the rebirth takes place, the new arrival will pay homage to his new father or mother as the case may be. The father or mother will then provide a suitable castle within his or her estate in accordance with the new arrival's power of merit. The new arrival will then be given certain duties such as supervising the attendants, etc. The father or mother will need to go to the registration office to register the birth of the new arrival just like it is done here on earth.

Now we will discuss the romance between a gentleman celestial being and a lady celestial being. Some people may think that since a gentleman celestial being may be reborn with 500 or more female celestial attendants, he will be romantically involved with all of them. This is impossible because romantic feelings do not arise in regards to one's own attendants. Romantic feelings will only arise with a lady celestial being that has been reborn for that special purpose. That is, one that is reborn in the castle owner's bed. The husband will need to register her birth at the registration office as well.

There are other routes to a romantic relationship. For example, a lady celestial being A and a gentleman celestial being B, each owns his/her own separate celestial castle, may meet. They can meet during a visit to the park or during a gathering at the celestial assembly to listen to a sermon, etc. When they meet, the fact that they had lived together during their human existence or the result of having accumulated merit together in their previous existences will cause them to feel a strong attraction for each other. They will first look at each other in an intense manner. A celestial being's eyes are as beautiful as a lotus petal. At any time, the eyes may be open, half-closed or fully-closed but they do not blink. Once their eyes meet, their personal radiances will glitter like diamond caught in the light. If the attraction is strong, they will decide right away to live with each other. The decision will need to be witnessed by the governor of the district.

Suppose after leaving the assembly hall they have decided to live together. They will need to set a date to meet the governor of the district. On that day, both parties will be accompanied by their attendants and the governor will have made ready the proper arrangements. For example, there will be a couch made of precious stones for the couple to sit on. Their radiances will glitter significantly. Their countenances are cheerful and bright. Their smiles are joyful. If both parties have amassed the same level of merit, the couch will float to where they are standing. The couple will hold each other's hands and are seated together on the couch. The governor will signify their union by pouring water over their joined hands. The governor will then request the celestial engineer, 'Visanukam', to create a new castle for them out of the couple's combined merit. That is, their previous castles will be combined into one castle, which is larger and more magnificent in every way.

In the situation where both celestial beings have a mother and a father, and the lady celestial being asks for the gentleman celestial being's hand in marriage, a high-ranking celestial being will be requested to head the ceremony. The high-ranking celestial being will proceed to the groom-to-be's castle accompanied by attendants and gifts for the groom-to-be's parents. If the lady celestial being possesses more merit than the gentleman celestial being, she will take his hand with its palm up and place it on top of her own hand. His parents or the lady herself will then pour water on their hands from a container made of precious stones. A tray will be placed underneath their hands to catch the water. If the situation is reverse in that the gentleman celestial being asks for the lady celestial being's hand in marriage, the gentleman celestial being will be the one to perform the ceremony. Whoever possesses the most merit will let the other person's hand rest on top. After the water pouring ceremony, there will be a wedding celebration just like we do here on earth.

A question has been raised in terms of whether or not there is adultery. The answer is no because celestial beings of this realm possess celestial morality, which includes 'Hiri' (being ashamed of sin) and 'Ottappa' (being fearful of the consequences of sin). Suppose during a visit to the park, two gentlemen celestial beings are attracted to the same lady celestial being. In this case, it is up to the lady celestial being to make her selection. Once that is done, the other gentleman celestial being will defer to the other. There is no fighting because anger will cause the celestial being to be burnt by the flames of his anger and he will cease to be immediately.

In a situation where the gentleman celestial being has many wives, he will provide a castle for each of them within the compound of his celestial estate. Each wife will be assigned certain duties. The physical relationship between man and wife in the Tavatimsa Realm is like that in the Human Realm except that there is no pregnancy and no birth from the womb.

In the situation where the gentleman celestial being or the lady celestial being must cease to be. That is, one partner experiences the sign of impending death, then the other partner will offer him/her comforting words like let's be husband and wife again in the future existence. He or she may also remind the other to accumulate merit while he/she is reborn on earth and to dedicate the merit to him/her. Once one partner ceases to be, the size of the celestial castle will be reduced depending on the remaining partner's level of overall merit. In some cases, the celestial castle disappears altogether and it is up to the governor of the district to find him/her a new residence. He usually does this by making a public announcement of the situation. Once the news is out, a high-ranking celestial being may take him/her in. He will provide for him/her a castle and attendants and assign him/her certain duties.

The family life of celestial beings in this realm ends when one party ceases to be. We can see that being parted from loved ones is part of life and cannot be avoided. Therefore, we must truly love our self by accumulating merit and training our self to be removed from all defilements so that we do not have to mourn another individual's death or experience sorrow again.

4.3.6 The Practice of Welcoming New Arrivals

In the last topic we mention the romantic life of celestial beings along with the different manners celestial beings in the Tavimsa Realm are reborn. They may die from earth and awaken in the middle of their celestial castles. They may see a bright path or they may be escorted from earth by a procession of celestial attendants in a celestial vehicle. Here, we will present the practice of welcoming new arrivals in this celestial realm.

Once a gentleman or lady celestial being is reborn, he/she will be greeted by a celestial official from the welcoming office. One of his duties is to inform the new arrival of the custom practiced in the realm. Welcoming officials assume different ranks and the designated rank of the welcoming official sent out to greet a new arrival will depend on the level of merit possessed by the new arrival. If the new arrival possesses a vast amount of merit, he/she will be greeted by a high-ranking official. If he or she possesses less merit, a lower-ranking official will be sent. Such is the practice of celestial beings. This official will also inform the new arrival of relevant information. He will give the new arrival the name of the district of his/her domicile and the location of the district office, which is called the celestial assembly hall. These district offices are miniatures of the great Sudhamma Celestial Assembly Hall. There are 32 major districts altogether and each major district is divided into minor districts.

The first practice that must be carried out by all new arrivals is to pay homage to the 'Culamani Cetiya', the holy shrine of the Celestial Realm. Afterward, the new arrival must report to the particular district office of his domicile.

Suppose a rebirth has occurred, if the new arrival possesses a low level of merit, he will have to go to the 'Culamani Cetiya' by himself. If the new arrival possesses a high level of merit, he will be greeted by a high-ranking district official and other celestial beings from the neighborhood. They will then accompany the new arrival to the Cetiya. The new arrival will travel to the Cetiya in an elaborate celestial vehicle along with a large number of his celestial attendants. A celestial being of lesser merit will go to the Cetiya alone or with a small number of celestial attendants. Some are reborn as a celestial attendant but the master or mistress may allow a few attendants to accompany the new arrival to the Cetiya.

The 'Culamani Cetiya' is the holy shrine of all celestial beings. It came into being through the merit-power of King Sakka accumulated during his human existence. The celestial engineer, 'Visanukam', was responsible for creating the Cetiya out of King Sakka's merit. Inside the Cetiya is the resting place of our Lord Buddha's canine teeth, and top knot. It is situated to the southeast direction of the 'Nilupalavan' park. The Cetiya is in the middle of the park and looks like lotuses one on top of another. At the very top there is a huge lotus bloom in the middle surrounded by seven smaller blooms made of green emerald far more beautiful than emerald on earth.

A helicopter view of the Cetiya shows that at the outer perimeter outside the crystal wall is the parking area for celestial vehicles. There are seven circular outer walls made of crystal with the innermost wall being the highest. The innermost outer wall contains four huge gates, one in each direction. Further inward is a circular path used for circumambulation. Next to this path, there is another wall with four gates followed

by a series of seven walls before the innermost Culamani Cetiya is reached. This inner sanctum is the very center of the holy shrine.

After the celestial vehicle is parked, the worshipper will go toward the first gate in order to enter the path used for circumambulation. There are officials at the gate to give instruction about the shrine and to direct the worshippers to the entrance of the Cetiya's gold courtyard. The gold here is incredibly radiant and beautiful. A worshipper is advised to remove his shoes. At the celestial being's thought of removing the shoes, the shoes will automatically disappear. The new arrival will enter the inner sanctum together with his attendants along with fragrant flowers from the garden. There are always a great number of worshippers there from different districts of the realm. Newcomers are just a small part of the worshippers. They carry the flowers between their palms that are pressed together and raised at chest level as they circumambulate the Cetiya. When they reach each gate, they will place the flowers on a stand where there are officials standing by to arrange the flowers for them. They face the gate and kneel down; they bow low with their knees, forearms and head touching the ground. This is called the 'Five-Point' bow. They circumambulate the Cetiya three times before leaving the gold courtyard. After the worship at the Cetiya, the newcomer is ready to report to the district office. He travels in his grand celestial vehicle, which runs on radiant, beautiful gold streets with beautiful flowering shrubs and trees on both sides of the streets, until he reaches the district office.

The district office looks like a smaller version of the 'Sudhamma Assembly Hall'. The building rises up like a mountain. It is not just a low building situated on the ground. The building has two distinct parts. The first part consists of seven crystal walls with gradations in height such that the innermost wall is the highest. The walls are separated by a distance of about 16 kilometers. In this large space between the walls there are gardens, ponds, flowering shrubs, tall trees, pavilions, etc. Going toward the center, each respective wall and the areas between the walls are increasingly more magnificent and more elaborate.

The second part consists of three floors that look like one lotus on top of another. Each floor is separated by a distance greater than that between the crystal walls. The third floor is the district office proper. It is a grand pavilion that is shaped like the 'Sudhamma Assembly Hall'. There are 32 major districts with their corresponding grand pavilions for King Sakka's 32 assistants.

The first floor of the second part is the district office for those with the least levels of merit such as celestial attendants. The second floor is for the castle owner's sons, daughters, and wives. The castle owners whether they own a small, medium or large castle are considered to possess high levels of merit, they will use the district office on the third floor.

A new arrival who is a castle owner will go to the third floor of the grand pavilion and enter the assembly hall. Along his way, celestial music will accompany him until he reaches the third floor of the pavilion. At the entrance, there are officials to welcome him inside. They will inform him about the activities that he is obliged to participate, advise him on how to pay his respect to high-ranking officials and how to greet the district governor. When the district governor arrives, there can be heard the sound of music and singing to salute and praise the governor for all the wholesome deeds he

performed during his human existence. All the newcomers will pay their respect to the governor together. An official will open a gold ledger to read the newcomer's history in regards to how he has accumulated his merit during his human existence, the vastness of his celestial wealth, and the address of his domicile. When a new arrival hears about all his deeds of merit, the rapture felt causes his personal radiance to sparkle brightly. The district governor then congratulates the new arrivals and the ceremony is concluded with the governor's departure.

In a situation where an individual possesses exceptional merit and is honored by King Sakka as his friend, King Sakka will chair the welcoming ceremony himself. He will be accompanied by his 32 high-ranking assistants. In this case, the ceremony will take place at the 'Sudhamma Assembly Hall'.

The above details are presented here to demonstrate how the Celestial Realm is the realm where the rewards of merit are reaped. A celestial being that possesses a vast amount of merit accumulated during his human existence will be rewarded with a high rank, a large number of attendants, autonomy, and celestial wealth. He will be properly welcomed and honored according to the level of his amassed merit.

There are still many more interesting details about life in the Tavatimsa Realm. We will not emphasize details of its physical aspects here; rather we will present relevant information so that the student can have some appreciation of the way of life in this celestial realm.

4.3.7 Celestial Activities on Buddhist Holy Day Which Takes Place on the 14th or 15th Day of the Waxing Moon.

This topic covers important activities of celestial beings in the Tavatimsa Realm, which are also relevant to the Catummaharajika Realm.

During the period of one month starting from the first day of the waxing moon to the last day of the waning moon, human beings have been involved in a number of activities. Individuals that are reckless in the way they live their lives will entertain themselves with destructive activities such as being involved in the courses of ruin, drinking, consuming addictive substances, etc. However, human beings that are prudent spend their time accumulating merit, chanting, giving alms, observing the Precepts, and practicing meditation. Most human beings never realize how their deeds are not only seen by other human beings but also by the refined physical identities dwelling in a different plane of reality. These include former human beings such as the earth sprites. Earth sprites come in all beliefs and all nationalities but they can coexist with each other peacefully. These extraterrestrial beings see the things that we do.

The student has already learnt that earth sprites belong to the Catummaharajika Realm, their form of government is divided into villages, districts, provinces, states, nations, and worldwide. Each assigned locality is governed by a chief starting from the head of a village to the head of a country. There are hundreds of these chiefs all over the world.

Therefore, these celestial officials watch what we do on earth. For example, celestial officials in China will observe human beings living in their district for their thoughts, words, and deeds. When they witness a good deed, they will record it in a gold sheet.

They do not write on it but the deed is recorded in moving images not unlike a videotaped document. Celestial officials in India will do the same thing with the people there.

These videotape-like records will be forwarded to the chief of the district. Each district chief will collect all of the records within his jurisdiction and make a wish; all recorded sheets will then be combined into a single sheet.

Once all the records are combined into a single sheet at a district level, it will be sent to a sylph or air sprite. That is the combined recording will be forwarded from an earth sprite to a higher-class celestial being in this case a sylph. The sylph in charge will collect all the recordings from all the district chiefs at the earth sprite level, make a wish and all the recordings will be once again combined into one sheet. The sylph will then forward the combined sheet to his district chief. A Naga sylph will forward his combined sheet to a Naga sylph district chief. A Yakkha sylph will forward his combined sheet to a Yakkha sylph district chief. A Garuda sylph will forward his combined sheet to a Garuda sylph. A Celestial Musician sylph will forward his combined sheet to a Celestial Musician sylph district chief.

The student may remember that the Great Mount Sineru is the center of the universe. Its southern territory is governed by King Virulahaka of the Garudas. Its western territory is governed by King Virupaksa of the Nagas. Its northern territory is governed by King Vessuvan of the Yakkhas. Its eastern territory is governed by King Dhataratha of the Celestial Musicians.

A Naga sylph district chief will take the combined recording to King Virupaksa, who rules the western territory of the Great Mount Sineru. King Virupaksa takes all of the recordings from all of his district chiefs, make a wish and all of the recordings will once again be combined into one sheet. It is likewise with King Vessuvan of the Yakkhas, King Virulahaka of the Garudas, and King Dhataratha of the Celestial Musicians. The four kings who are also the protectors of the earth plane will then meet and have an audience with King Sakka in the Tavatimsa Realm to present all of their recordings of good deeds performed by human beings on earth. A day before the Buddhist Holy Day, King Sakka will have a meeting with all of his officials. The meeting will cover two topics. One topic deals with the general condition of the Tavatimsa Realm. The other deals with the recordings of good deeds presented to King Sakka by the four kings. After the meeting, King Sakka will give his subordinates a lecture, which coincides with the Buddhist Holy Day on earth. The Buddhist Holy Day falls on the 8th day of the waning moon and the 14th or 15th day of the waxing moon.

Celestial beings of the Tavatimsa Realm can tell the Buddhist Holy Day from checking the sun's and the moon's orbiting patterns on earth through their celestial eye. On that day, they will meet at the 'Sudhamma Assembly Hall'. King Sakka will sit on a raised dais to preach the Dhamma. The lecture material aims to remind his subjects not to be reckless but to be prudent in living their lives. He admonishes his subjects to think often of the Lord Buddha (buddhanussati) and to pay homage to the 'Culamani Cetiya', which is the fertile field for cultivating merit for celestial beings. Celestial beings are like human beings. On Buddhist Holy Day or a holiday, prudent human beings spend their time at the temple listening to Dhamma sermons, practicing meditation, and making merit. Reckless human beings spend their free time with nonsensical and

harmful forms of entertainment. In the same manner, there are prudent and reckless celestial beings. Reckless celestial beings spend their time immersed in the tremendous joy and sensual pleasures provided by their celestial wealth. They spend their time visiting celestial parks and make merry with other celestial beings. Therefore, King Sakka admonishes his subjects not to be reckless but to be prudent and live their lives appropriately.

After King Sakka's lecture, which coincides with the full-moon evening on earth, he will announce at the celestial assembly the deeds of merit performed on earth over the period. Such deeds include caring for one's aging parents, giving alms, observing the Precepts, practicing meditation. Any human being that has performed deeds of great merit in the period covered, his name will be mentioned at the assembly so that celestial beings can express their rejoicing. In this case, his name will be mentioned first followed by the names of individuals that perform deeds of less merit in descending order. During any period where human beings as a whole perform few deeds of merit, celestial beings in the Tavatimsa Realm will not feel their usual joyful selves. They will talk among themselves about how the Celestial Realm will be empty and the Hell Realm will be packed because of all the drinking, smoking, consumption of addictive substances, and gambling that are going on as a result of human recklessness. But when human beings as a whole perform a large number of good deeds, they will rejoice and sing a resounding 'Sa-dhu'. They will be joyful and their personal radiances will sparkle as a result of their joy.

These are celestial activities that occur during the 14th or 15th day of the waxing moon starting from earth all the way to the Tavatimsa Realm. The student should realize by now how we are under the observation of celestial beings. It behooves us not commit any indecent deed. Most importantly, this knowledge should cause us to develop shame in regards to sin (Hiri) and fear in regards to its consequences (Ottappa).

Moreover, celestial beings are former human beings. Once they leave the Human Realm, their opportunity to perform deeds of merit is over. Yet, they still want to be able to rejoice in the merit made by individuals on earth, since it is the only way that they can continue to accumulate merit. Therefore, they watch for the opportunity to express their rejoicing whenever we gather together to perform deeds of great merit.

4.4 The Yama Realm

The Yama Realm is the third celestial realm of the Sense Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. Every aspect of this celestial realm such as physical appearance, position, sovereignty, sound, sight, and scent is more refined and elaborate than those in the Tavatimsa and Catummaharajika Realms. Details of this celestial realm as found in the Tripitaka are quite scant.

4.4.1 The Meaning of 'Yama'

We have already learnt the meaning of the word 'Yama'. It means 'without hardship' or 'the attainment of happiness'. The Yama Realm means the dwelling of celestial

beings that are without hardship, that derive happiness from increasingly more refined celestial castles and celestial wealth. Its other meaning is the dwelling of the celestial king 'Suyama'.

4.4.2 Location and Characteristics of the Yama Realm

King Suyama is the sovereign of this realm. The Yama Realm is located in the air about 670,000 kilometers above the Tavatimsa Realm. It is mentioned in the Commentary that one celestial realm is separated from another by an equal distance of 670,000 kilometers. This celestial realm covers a much greater area than the Tavatimsa Realm.

Celestial castles of this realm are made of silver or gold and are absolutely beautiful and magnificent. Each celestial castle is surrounded by a wall made of clear crystal. There are innumerable gardens, parks, and lotus ponds. They are all incredibly beautiful and elaborate. The most amazing thing is this celestial realm lies a great distance beyond the orbiting paths of the sun and the moon, yet the sky in this realm has a golden hue that is soothing to the eyes. The light in this realm comes from the radiances of the precious gems and the celestial inhabitants. The night and day are differentiated by the time periods celestial flowers open and close. Celestial flowers are open during the day and close during the night.

4.4.3 The Birth and Consumption of Sensual Pleasures in the Yama Realm

The birth mode in the Yama Realm is 'Opatatika'. As soon as they are reborn, they become handsome 18-20 year-old gentleman celestial beings or beautiful 16-18 year-old lady celestial beings. Celestial possessions of this realm are more refined than those in the Tavatimsa Realm.

There is no sexual intercourse between a gentleman celestial being and a lady celestial being. There are only embraces. There is no pregnancy and the only birth mode occurring in this realm is 'Opatatika'.

4.4.4 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Yama Realm

There is mentioned the lifespan of celestial beings in this realm in the 'Vitathata Sutta'. One day and night in this celestial realm is equal to 200 earth years. There are 30 celestial nights in one celestial month and there are 12 months in one celestial year. Celestial beings of the Yama Realm have an average lifespan of 2,000 celestial years or 144 million earth years. Their lifespan is four times longer than that in the Catummaharajika Realm

It can be seen that the higher the level of the celestial realm is, the more refined and elaborate the celestial wealth will be. The average lifespan is also longer. It means that celestial beings in the Yama Realm must have accumulated a vast amount of merit during their human existence.

4.5 The Tusita Realm

The Tusita Realm is the fourth celestial realm of the Sense Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. Every aspect of this celestial realm such as physical appearance, position, sovereignty, sound, sight, and scent is more refined and elaborate than those in the first three celestial realms. This celestial realm is extraordinary in that it is the dwelling of a vast number of confirmed and unconfirmed Bodhisattas, who will one day in the far future become enlightened as a Buddha. It is also the dwelling of individuals that will in the far future become a Buddha's Perfected Disciple. This celestial realm is highly interesting and its details are given in the Tripitaka.

4.5.1 The Meaning of 'Tusita'

The word 'Tusita' means being devoid of anxiety, being filled with pleasure and cheerful joy. Therefore, the Tusita Realm means the dwelling of celestial beings that are devoid of anxiety and filled with pleasure and cheerful joy.

4.5.2 Location and Characteristics of the Tusita Realm

The Tusita Realm is very vast. It is governed by King Santusita, who has already attained the first stage of holiness as a Stream-Winner. This realm is the dwelling of a great number of Bodhisattas. It is located at a distance of about 670,000 kilometers above the Yama Realm. There is no sunlight or moonlight in this realm. Therefore, there is no shadow. There are no dark corners anywhere because of the radiances of all things that exist there as well as those of its inhabitants. Brightness comes from the radiances of celestial beings, celestial castles, gardens, parks, ponds, and the surroundings. It has no need for sunlight.

The Tusita Realm is not a round sphere like the earth but it is more like a round disk. Looking up from the Yama Realm, one can see a soothing brightness emanating from the realm. Looking down from the Tusita Realm, one can see the Yama Realm. Looking up from the Tusita Realm, one can also see a soothing brightness emanating from the Nimmanarati Realm. Looking down from the Tusita Realm, the Tavatimsa Realm appears very small by comparison, since the Tusita Realm is very vast.

Next the student will learn about the structure of the Tusita Realm. It has as its center the celestial castle of King Santusita. The realm is then divided into four circular domains as follows:

The first circular domain surrounds the center of the realm and is the dwelling of holy individuals such as the Stream-Winners, and the Once-Returners.

The second circular domain surrounds the first circular domain and forms a huge ring around it. It is the dwelling of the confirmed Bodhisattas. That is, they have been confirmed by a previous Buddha that they will one day far into the future definitely become enlightened as a Buddha.

The third circular domain forms a ring around the second domain. It is the dwelling of the unconfirmed Bodhisattas. That is, their future enlightenment as a Buddha has not yet been confirmed by a previous Buddha. They still have to pursue their perfections for countless more existences.

The fourth circular domain forms the outer ring of the Tusita Realm. It is the dwelling of individuals that have amassed a vast amount of merit during their human existence.

Within these four vast circular domains there are numerous celestial communities. Each celestial community is made up of celestial estates owned by celestial beings of similar amount of merit.

a) Characteristics of Celestial Castles in the Tusita Realm

A human being's home is used to shelter him from the heat, the rain, the sun, and the wind. Likewise, a celestial being's home is the celestial estate, which contains the celestial castle. Celestial castles come in different sizes depending on the owner's level of merit. There is mentioned in the Tripitaka celestial castles that are 480 kilometers high, 1,920 kilometers high, etc.

There are three main types of celestial castles in this celestial realm: crystal (diamond), silver, and gold. They are arranged around King Santusita's castle in a beautiful and orderly fashion. They look like waves spreading from the center. Celestial castles that are the closest to the king's castle will have extremely bright radiances and are the most magnificent. In terms of the magnificence and grandeur of celestial castles, there are gradations in descending order based on the distances from the center such that the least bright and magnificent castles are at the outer perimeter. All celestial possessions and position depend on the level of each celestial being's accumulated merit.

Celestial castles float in the air in loose clusters according to the merit level of the owners. Some clusters are large, some are small. The estates may look as though they adjoin one another but they actually are not. They are however separated by empty spaces. In the Celestial Realm there are no mountains, seas, and oceans that belong to the general public. There are only private estates. Within the estate, there are beautiful trees. Celestial trees are not as crude as the trees on earth. Mountains are made of gold or precious gems, and the ground is made of gold that feels soft to the touch and not slippery.

Each celestial estate is complete in itself like an entire city. Its owner is like its king or queen with complete sovereignty. That is, the owner is free to govern his /her own castle as he/she pleases. The master/mistress of the estate is waited on by his/her retinue of attendants. Each attendant has a specific duty. If the estate owner possesses a vast amount of merit, he will have a retinue of attendants numbering in the hundreds of thousands, one million, or ten millions. Each estate is like a personal statement that publicizes the owner's social standing. It is also used for various social activities.

Celestial beings have different modes of transportation. They may travel by a celestial vehicle or by a celestial animal. They may travel on their own or with their attendants. When a higher-ranking celestial being's vehicle is passing by, vehicles of lower-ranking celestial beings must yield to it. Celestial vehicles or celestial animals only

travel through the spaces in between celestial estates and never directly above them. This is a display of common courtesy.

Besides the usual celestial activities of socializing, visiting the parks and other forms of entertainment, celestial beings of this celestial realm are engaged in the distinguished activities of conversing about and listening to the Dhamma. The reason is celestial beings of the Tusita Realm do not live their lives recklessly. They are all sages and look forward to their future accumulation of merit on earth. They are doing everything they can for the purpose of being able to eventually rid themselves of all defilements.

b) The Structure of Celestial Castles

Each castle arises and awaits the rebirth of its owner. The structure of each castle is a result of how merit has been amassed through such wholesome deeds as alms-giving, Precepts observing, and meditation practice. These deeds of merit provide the structure of each castle in three main parts as follows:

Part 1: This is the ground part and is formed by the merit of alms-giving. It does not consist of just one floor but it has many floors, one on top of another. The distance between floors is very great, and has a rectangular shape. If the alms-giving involves contributions made toward the building of a consecrated assembly hall, a shrine hall, a preaching hall, or a Cetiya, this part will be huge.

Part 2: This is the middle part and is formed by the merit of Precepts observing. Its size is smaller than the first part. It is round and consists of many floors, one on top of another.

Part 3: This is the top part of the castle. It is formed by the merit of meditation practice. It is round and consists of many floors.

There is a wall surrounding the rectangular path that exists between the floors. If the merit of alms-giving is great, the first part will be huge. If the merit of Precepts observing is great, the second part will be huge. If the merit of meditation practice is great, the third part will be huge. The structure and appearance of the castle depends on the types of merit accumulated during its owner's human existence.

4.5.3 The Birth and Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Tusita Realm

Rebirth in the Tusita Realm occurs via the Oppapatika mode or Spontaneous Rising. The new arrival assumes the form of a lady or gentleman celestial being instantly. A gentleman celestial being will be between 18-20 years old and a lady celestial being will be between 16-18 years old. Celestial wealth in this realm is more refined and more elaborate than that in the Yama Realm. The new arrival will be welcomed by the celestial official in the district of his domicile as well as other celestial neighbors depending on the level of the new arrival's accumulated merit. The celestial official will greet the newcomer at his/her celestial castle. He will then inform him/her of all the celestial activities that he/she must attend. There is a meeting to listen to the Dhamma on Buddhist Holy Days, etc.

Celestial beings of this celestial realm have glorious good looks. They are all noble-minded Buddhists. They have a very good understanding about merit and sin, and the Dhamma. They are interested in keeping the company of the learned and the wise. They are pleased to practice the Dhamma because they have been staunch merit-makers. There are Bodhisattas that are well-versed in the Dhamma. They take turn giving a sermon to the masses. Although celestial beings in this realm enjoy celestial wealth that is far more refined and elaborate than that in the first three celestial realms, they do not live their lives recklessly. Everyday there are discourses on the Dhamma attended by many celestial beings. The reason is King Santusita is a very virtuous individual. He is learnt and well-versed in the Dhamma and enjoys listening to and preaching the Dhamma.

King Santusita regularly invites high-ranking celestial beings that possess great Dhamma wisdom to give a sermon at the assembly hall.

No sexual intercourse occurs in this celestial realm. Romantic partners are content to give each other warm embraces like those given between friends. The reason is celestial possessions in this realm are so refined and elaborate that they remove all interest in sexual intercourse from the inhabitants. There is no pregnancy, no birth from the womb, no birth from the egg, and no birth from moisture in this celestial realm. There is only one birth mode, which is ‘Oppapatika’, just like it is in the Tavimsa and Yama Realms.

4.5.4 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Tusita Realm

The lifespan of celestial beings in this celestial realm is given in the ‘**Vitathata Sutta**’. One day and night in this celestial realm is equal to 400 earth years. There are 30 celestial nights in one celestial month and there are 12 celestial months in one celestial year. The average lifespan of celestial beings in the Tusita Realm is 4,000 celestial years, which is equal to 576 million earth years. Their lifespan is eight times longer than that of celestial beings in the Catummaharajika Realm. Their lifespan is eight times longer than that of celestial beings in the Catummaharajika Realm.

4.5.5 The Reasons the Tusita Realm is the Center of Knowers

As mentioned earlier, the Tusita Realm is extraordinary compared to other celestial realms. What makes it extraordinary is the fact that it is the dwelling of the confirmed Bodhisattas that will become enlightened as a Buddha one day far in the future. It is also the dwelling of celestial beings that have been accumulating merit for the purpose of one day becoming the disciples of a Buddha. One may ask why these Bodhisattas and all the learned sages desire to be reborn in the Tusita Realm in spite of the fact that the level of their accumulated merit makes it possible for them to choose to be reborn in any celestial realm. There are at least three reasons for their preference.

1. The average lifespan in the Tusita Realm is neither too long nor too short. It is just right. If it is too long, it will cause these wise individuals to have to wait too long to be reborn as a human being for the purpose of accumulating more merit.

2. In this realm, the Bodhisattas can cease to be whenever they wish. In general, celestial beings cease to be for different reasons. It may be that their merit has been used up. It may be that it is the end of their lifespan. It may be caused by their anger. But the Bodhisattas can choose to cease to be from the Tusita Realm to be reborn in the Human Realm for the express purpose of accumulating more merit or to become enlightened as a Buddha. All they have to do is to go into a meditative state and wish for a rebirth. This special privilege is above the law of nature.

3. It is the place where Dhamma discussions among the virtuous sages take place. This celestial realm is populated with sages and the Bodhisattas. They are like-minded in that they have been working their ways toward enlightenment for countless lifetimes. When they come together in a celestial assembly, Dhamma conversations bring them delight and pleasure.

The student can by now appreciate why the Bodhisattas gather in the Tusita Realm, a realm more extraordinary than any other celestial realms.

4.6 The Nimmanarati Realm

The Nimmanarati Realm is the fifth celestial realm of the Sense Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. It is a realm where the physical age and complexion, position, sovereignty, sight, sound, and scent are far more refined and elaborate than the first four celestial realms. It is more extraordinary than the first four celestial realms in terms of celestial possessions for the very reason that each celestial being can create whatever he/she desires. This celestial realm makes for an interesting study.

4.6.1 The Meaning of ‘Nimmanarati’

The word ‘Nimmanarati’ means celestial beings that are immersed in the happiness and pleasure of the five senses as a result of their own creation. Another meaning is the dwelling of celestial beings where King Sunimamita is the sovereign.

4.6.2 Location and Characteristics of the Nimmanarati Realm

Its vastness is far greater than the Tusita Realm. It is situated above the Great Mount Sineru at a distance of about 672,000 kilometers above the Tusita Realm. The sun and the moon cannot reach this celestial realm. It has no shadow and no dark corners. Light emanates from everything contained in the realm such as its inhabitants, its castles, its parks, its ponds, and the surroundings.

This celestial realm is shaped like a disk and not round like the earth. Looking up from the Tusita Realm, one can see a great brightness that is soothing to the eyes.

4.6.3 The Birth and the Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Nimmanarati Realm

Rebirth in this celestial realm occurs via the ‘Opatika’ birth mode. One is reborn as a handsome gentleman celestial being or a beautiful lady celestial being. The gentleman celestial being is at an average age of 18-20 years old and the lady celestial being is at an average age of 16-18. Celestial possessions in this realm are more refined than those in the Tusita Realm.

Celestial beings of this realm are far more handsome and beautiful than those in the first four celestial realms. They exude greater personal radiances. If they wish for anything in order to gratify their sensual pleasures, they can just create it. For example, they can make changes to their celestial castles. They can create a celestial castle with 100,000 spires. Or they can create a celestial castle as tall as the sky. This ability to create whatever they wish is not the domain of inhabitants of the first four celestial realms, whose celestial possessions are determined by their accumulated merit. In the first four celestial realms, the size and radiance of the celestial castles may increase as a result of merit dedicated to the owners by their surviving relatives on earth but the structure cannot be changed.

Celestial possessions in this celestial realm are truly refined, elaborate, grand and vast be they celestial parks, lotus ponds or assembly halls. There are three types of celestial castles: silver, gold and crystal (diamond) in ascending order of merit.

There is no sexual intercourse in this celestial realm. Celestial couples are content to just hold hands and be near each other. There is no pregnancy. There are no other birth modes other than ‘Opatika’ just like the way it is in the Tavatimsa, Yama, and Tusita Realms.

4.6.4 The Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Nimmanarati Realm

Their average lifespan is given in the ‘**Vitathata’ Sutta**. One day and night in this celestial realm is equal to 800 earth years. There are 30 celestial nights in one celestial month, and there are 12 celestial months in one celestial year. The average lifespan of celestial beings in the Nimmanarati Realm is 8,000 celestial years or 2,304 million earth years. Their lifespan is 16 times greater than that of the celestial beings in the Catummaharajika Realm.

4.7 The Paranimmitavasavatti Realm

The Paranimmitavasavatti Realm is the sixth and highest celestial realm of the Sense Sphere belonging to the States of Happiness. It is the realm where the physical age and complexion, position, sovereignty, sight, sound, and scent are far more refined and elaborate than the rest of the celestial realms.

4.7.1 The Meaning of ‘Paranimmitavasavatti’

The term ‘Paranimmitavasavatti’ means celestial beings that are immersed in the joy and happiness of the five senses without having to create anything themselves. The reason is whatever they desire will be created for them by celestial attendants. Another meaning is the dwelling of celestial beings where King Paranimmitavasavatti is the sovereign.

4.7.2 Location and Characteristics of the Paranimmitavasavatti Realm

The greatness and vastness of this realm is far beyond the Nimmanarati Realm. It is situated above the Great Mount Sineru at a distance of about 672,000 kilometers above the Nimmanarati Realm. The sun and the moon cannot reach this celestial realm. It has no shadow and no dark corners. It is lit by the brightness emanated from everything and everyone in it which include its inhabitants, its castles, its parks, its ponds, etc.

This celestial realm has a disk shape and is not round like the earth. When viewed from the Nimmanarati Realm, one sees a great brightness that is soothing to the eyes.

4.7.3 The Birth and Consumption of Sensual Pleasures of Celestial Beings in the Paranimmitavasavatti Realm

An individual is reborn in this celestial realm via the Opatatika birth mode. At the moment of rebirth, one is either a handsome gentleman celestial being or a beautiful lady celestial being. The gentleman celestial being is at an average age of 18-20 years old and the lady celestial being is at an average age of 16-18. The celestial possessions in this realm are far more refined and elaborate than those in the Nimmanarati Realm.

There is no sexual intercourse in this celestial realm. The celestial couple expresses their love for each other by looking into each other’s eyes. They need no physical contact. Only romantic couples or romantic couples-to-be will look into each other’s eyes. Each couple can make a wish to consolidate their estates. There is no pregnancy and there are no other birth modes. There is only the Opatatika birth mode just like the way it is in the Tavatimsa, Yama, and Tusita realms.

4.7.4 The Average Lifespan of Celestial Beings in the Paranimmitavasavatti Realm

The average lifespan of celestial beings in this realm is given in the ‘**Vitathata Sutta**’. One day and night in this realm is equal to 1,600 earth years. There are 30 celestial nights in one celestial month, and there are 12 celestial months in one celestial year. Celestial beings in this realm have an average lifespan of 16,000 celestial years or 9,126 million earth years. Their average lifespan is 32 times longer than that of celestial beings in the Catummaharajika Realm.

4.8 Conclusion

The student has now learnt some details about the six celestial realms. We can see that life in the Celestial Realm is about reaping the rewards of merit. The living condition is blissful. There is no need to earn a living. There is no need for earthly activities. There is no sickness. There is no aging. Their lives are spent immersed in the joy and pleasure of their celestial possessions, which occur as a result of their accumulated merit. They live in magnificent and grand celestial estates. They are waited on attentively by their celestial attendants. They have celestial parks, celestial trees, and celestial flowers that are simply beautiful and pleasurable.

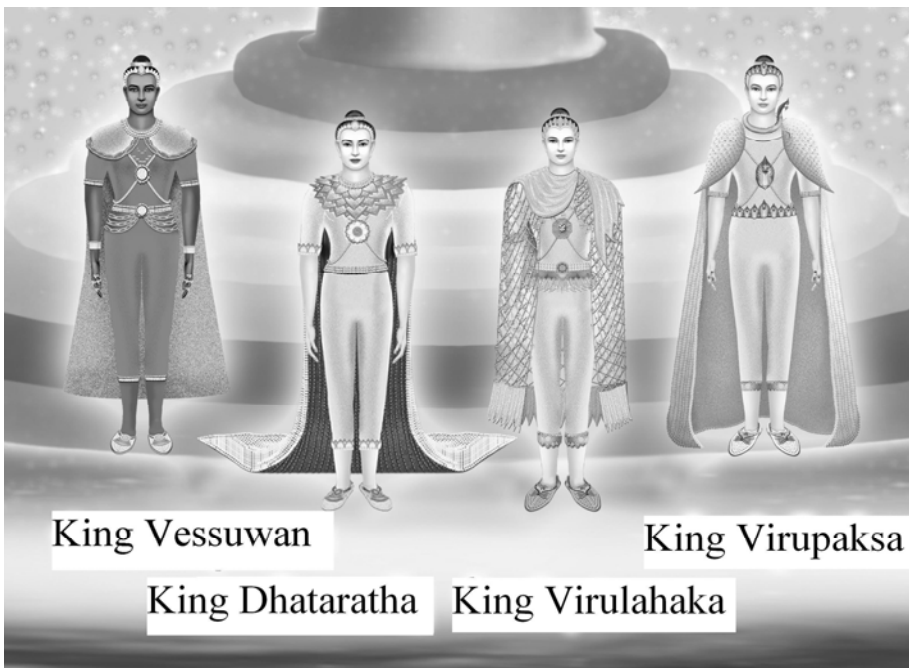
The differences in each of the celestial realms are caused by the different levels of accumulated merit during the individual's human existence. The higher the celestial realm, the greater and the more refined the celestial possessions are. Although celestial beings enjoy a truly blissful lifestyle, a large number of them still live life very recklessly. They spend all of their time immersed in the sensual pleasures of sight, taste, smell, sound, and touch. They do not listen or practice the Dhamma. They do not express their rejoicing when human beings are performing deeds of merit. When the signs of their ceasing-to-be occur, they are filled with great sorrow. All they can do is whine and carry on about having to leave their pleasurable circumstances. They cannot be sure if they will have their next rebirth in the States of Happiness because for all they know, their merit may have sent its fruit first and the destination of their next rebirth may be dictated by their past evil Kamma.

Life in the Celestial Realm is very long compared to life on earth. The higher the celestial realm, the longer the lifespan of its inhabitants is. If we accumulate a small amount of merit during our human existence, when we have a rebirth in the Celestial Realm, seniority does not go by our age or anything else but by our level of accumulated merit only. Anyone possessing a vast amount of merit will be admired and honored by other celestial beings. When an individual's amassed merit is nearly as great as that of the sovereign of the realm, he will be welcomed and honored to the greatest extent. An individual with a lesser amount of merit will feel embarrassed in the presence of those with a greater amount of merit. When celestial beings assemble together, he will have to sit to the rear of the assembly hall. He will feel embarrassed for the duration of his lifespan. All he can think of is how he should have accumulated a lot more merit during his human existence. The forms of hardship suffered by celestial beings arise from their low levels of merit, which is reflected by their low levels of celestial wealth, prestige, and sovereignty.

This chapter aims to teach the student that the Celestial Realm is a place for reaping the rewards of one's merit and the Human Realm is the only place for accumulating merit. Since we are here to accumulate merit, we should do it to the best of our ability. Moreover, we should endeavor to rid ourselves of as much defilements as possible until we can attain Nibbana. But if we cannot attain Nibbana in this lifetime, we will at least have our respite in the Celestial Realm. We need provisions in the form of accumulated merit so that we can return to the Human Realm to continue with our good deeds. We have to go through the round of rebirth until we can be totally removed from all defilements.

Comparison of the Lifespan of Celestial Beings to That of Human Being

The Celestial Realm	Lifespan (in Celestial Years)	Length of One Day & One Night in Celestial Realm (in Earth Years)	Lifespan (in Millions of Earth Years)
1 st realm: Catummaharajika	500	50	9
2 nd realm: Tavatimsa	1,000	100	36
3 rd realm: Yama	2,000	200	144
4 th realm: Tusita	4,000	400	576
5 th realm: Nimmanarati	8,000	800	2,304
6 th realm: Paranimmitavasavatti	16,000	1,600	9,216



**The Government of
Catummaharajika
Realm**



**Full Tower in
Tusita Realm**

CHAPTER 5

THE FORM BRAHMA REALM

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 5

THE FORM BRAHMA REALM

5.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Brahma Realm’

5.2 The Reality of Brahma Beings

5.3 The Realms Contained within the Form Brahman Realm

5.3.1 The Three Realms of the First Jhana

5.3.2 The Three Realms of the Second Jhana

5.3.3 The Three Realms of the Third Jhana

5.3.4 The Seven Realms of the Fourth Jhana

CONCEPTS

The Form Brahma Realm is part of the three spheres, which include the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, and the Non-Form Sphere. It is the dwelling of all the Form Brahma Beings. An individual can have a rebirth in the Form Brahma Realm if during his human existence, besides giving to charity causes and observing the Precepts on a regular basis, he also practices meditation diligently until he has attained the Jhanas or Absorptions. The Form Brahma Realm is located high above the Celestial Realm.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the lifestyle, and the location of each Form Brahma realm.
2. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning and the characteristics of the Form Brahma Beings in each Form Brahma realm.

THE FORM BRAHMA REALM

Introduction

The Form Brahma Realm is the dwelling of Form Brahma Beings, who during their human existence had practiced meditation until they were able to attain the Jhanas or Absorptions. After they die, they have a rebirth as a Form Brahma Being at a particular realm depending on the strength of their Jhana or absorption. The Form Brahma Realm contains 16 realms altogether. Brahma possessions are many times more refined and elaborate than those in the Celestial Realm. The radiance of Brahma beings differs depending on the realm they dwell in. Those in the higher realms possess a brighter and more refined radiance. In the same way, Brahma beings in the higher realms have a longer lifespan than those in the lower realms.

5.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Brahma Realm’

The Brahma Realm is the dwelling of Form Brahma Beings. It is located high above the Celestial Realm. It is about 88 million kilometers above the Paranimmitavasavatti Realm. All the Brahma wealth is far more refined and elaborate than the most magnificent celestial wealth.

The word ‘**Brahma**’ means individuals that are endowed with special qualities such as the Jhana, etc. There is no sexual differentiation in the Form Brahma Realm because the Form Brahma Beings take no delight in sensual pleasures. This is a result of their diligent meditation practice during their human existence to such an extent that they were able to attain the Jhana and overcome any sensual desire. However, their physical form appears more masculine than feminine. Human beings that practice meditation until they can attain the Jhana such as Buddhist monks, novices, ascetics, Yogis, recluses, etc., will have a rebirth in the Form Brahma Realm after they die. Their lifespan is far greater than that of celestial beings in the Celestial Realm.

Brahma beings are extraordinary in that they have no more need for food like beings in the lower realms. The reason is they can feed on the raptures of their Jhana. Besides, their physical form is very clean-cut and beautiful. They exude a personal radiance thousands of times brighter than the sun. If they wish their radiance to permeate the entire universe, they can do it easily. The joints in their body such as the elbow, the knee, etc., are so beautifully smooth that they are not visible. Their head and hair is also magnificently beautiful. Their heads are crowned with a headdress. They spend forever in the raptures of their Jhana.

The popular belief that Brahma beings have four faces is far from the truth. They have only one face just like celestial beings and human beings do except that their faces are radiant and glorious and they exude a personal radiance, the intensity of which depends on the level of their Jhana attainments.

5.2 The Reality of Brahma Beings

The reality of Brahma Beings was cited in chapter 4 of the textbook for the ‘Buddhist Cosmology’ course. The chapter presents the details about the birth of a new earth and the appearance of the first generation human beings. After the new earth is reformed and the condition is right for habitation, a group of Brahma beings called the Abhassara Brahma beings have ceased to be in the Form Brahma Realm and have their subsequent rebirths in the Human Realm via the ‘Oppapatika’ birth mode.

The reality of Brahma beings is also cited in the Apposasukakatha Scripture and had to do with a situation right after the Lord Gautama Buddha’s Enlightenment. The Lord Buddha was concerned that His enlightened knowledge was so deep and complex that it would be difficult for others to follow. Having thus considered the situation, the Lord Buddha was not inclined to preach the Dhamma to the public.

At the time, King Sahampadi, who governs the Mahabrahma Realm, knew about the Lord Buddha’s inclination and feared a calamity would befall the earth and all the beings because they would not have the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma. He immediately descended from the Brahma Realm to appear in front of the Lord Buddha. He besought the Lord Buddha to preach the Dhamma because there were indeed individuals that were not so thickly covered with defilements and could benefit from listening to the Dhamma. Given the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma, they could indeed grasp it. As a result of the Brahma king’s request, the Lord Buddha employed the Buddha Eye to survey all the beings at the time. He later told the Brahma king that He agreed to preach the Dhamma.

These sources indicate that indeed Brahma beings and the Brahma Realm exist. These Brahma beings are all former human beings that have practiced meditation until they could attain the Jhana along with the noble sentiments.

5.3 The Realms Contained within the Form Brahma Realm

The student has already learnt that rebirth in the Brahma Realm occurs as a result of the individual’s Jhana attainments during his human existence.

There are altogether 16 realms in the Brahma Realm. These realms are separated by the level of the Jhana attainments. Brahma beings that possess lower levels of Jhana attainments will occupy the lower realms and those with higher levels of Jhana attainments will dwell in the higher realms. These 16 realms can be divided into groups according to the Four Jhanas in ascending order. In other words, the higher the realms, the higher the level of Jhana attainments.

1. The realms of the First Jhana - There are three realms altogether: the Brahmparisajja Realm, the Brahmpurohita Realm, and the Mahabrahma Realm.
2. The realms of the Second Jhana – There are three realms altogether: the Parittabha Realm, the Appamanabha Realm, and the Abhassara Realm.
3. The realms of the Third Jhana – There are three realms altogether: the Parittasubha Realm, the Appamanasubha Realm, and the Subhakinha Realm.
4. The realms of the Fourth Jhana – There are seven realms altogether: the Vehapphala Realm, the Asannisatta Realm, and the five realms of Brahmsuddhavas.

5.3.1 The Three Realms of the First Jhana

These realms are the dwelling of individuals that have attained the First Jhana. These three realms are located in the same latitude and are not above one another as they are in the Celestial Realm. They include the Brahmparisajja, the Brahmpurohita, and the Mahabrahma Realms.

1. The Brahmparisajja Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess a weak First Jhana. They are ordinary Brahma beings and do not possess any special privilege. They serve as attendants of Mahabrahma beings. Their lifespan is a third of the Vivattathaayii Asonkikappa¹ or 21 1/3 Antarakappas.

2. The Brahmpurohita Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess a medium strength First Jhana. They serve as advisors to Mahabrahma beings and conduct different activities for the Mahabrahma beings. Their lifespan is half an Vivattathaayii Asonkikappa or 32 Antarakappas.

3. The Mahabrahma Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess a strong First Jhana. Brahma beings in this realm are superior to the Brahma beings in the Brahmparisajja and Brahmpurohita realms. This realm is also the dwelling of King Sahampadi, who requested our Lord Buddha to preach the Dhamma to all beings. The lifespan of Brahma beings in this realm is one Vivattathaayii Asonkikappa or 64 Antarakappas.

Parameters used to determine the domicile of each Brahma being are based on the level of their Jhana attainments hence their accumulated merit. Individuals that have attained a stronger Jhana will live in the center of the realm. Individuals that have attained a weaker Jhana will live further away from the center. That is, Mahabrahma beings reside at the center of the realm, next to it are the residences of Brahmpurohita beings. At the outer ring are the residences of Brahmparisajja beings. This principle applies to the realms of the second and third Jhanas as well.

¹ An Asonkikappa is equal to 64 Antarakappas. One Kappa or one earth age can be divided into four Asonkikappas. The earth is inhabitable only during the last Asonkikappa. A Kappa or an earth age covers the time period from the reformation of a new earth to its duration and finally annihilation.

5.3.2 The Three Realms of the Second Jhana

These realms are the dwelling of Brahma beings that have attained the Second Jhana. They are located in the same latitude and include the Parittabha, the Appamanabha, and the Abhassara Realms.

4. The Parittabha Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess a weak Second Jhana. Their personal radiances are inferior to the Brahma beings in the higher realms. (Paritta means less, Abha means radiance or light) Their lifespan is two Kappas or two earth ages.

5. The Appamanabha Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess a medium strength Second Jhana. They exude a bright personal radiance. Their lifespan is 4 Kappas or 4 earth ages.

6. The Abhassara Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess a strong Second Jhana. They exude a very bright personal radiance and enjoy fully the raptures of their Jhana attainments. They constantly reside in a state of bliss and their consciousness is very bright, which results in a very bright personal radiance. Their lifespan is 8 Kappas or 8 earth ages.

5.3.3 The Three Realms of the Third Jhana

These realms are the dwelling of Brahma beings that have attained the Third Jhana. They are located in the same altitude high above the realms of the Second Jhana. They include the Parittasubha, the Appamanasubha, and the Subhakinha Realms.

7. The Parittasubha Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess a weak Third Jhana. The personal radiance of these Brahma beings is like that of the moon in that it is not scattered but contained in a circle around the Brahma being. Still their radiances are inferior to those in the higher Brahma realms. Their lifespan is 16 Kappas or 16 earth ages.

8. The Appamanasubha Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess a medium strength Third Jhana. The beauty of their personal radiances is beyond compare. Their lifespan is 32 Kappas or 32 earth ages.

9. The Subhakinha Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess a strong Third Jhana. These Brahma beings possess a beautiful personal radiance. Their lifespan is 64 Kappas or 64 earth ages.

5.3.4 The Seven Realms of the Fourth Jhana

These realms are the dwelling of Brahma beings that have attained the Fourth Jhana. They include the Vehapphala, Asannisatta, and the Suddhavas realms. There are five Suddhavas realms and include the realms of Aviha, Atappa, Sudassa, Sudassi, and Akanittha.

10. The Vehapphala Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings of great Jhana attainments. Brahma beings in the First, Second, and Third Jhanas cannot have a rebirth in this realm. This realm is not destroyed when the rest of the universe undergoes a period of total annihilation at the end of each earth age.

During the period of destruction by fire, the realms of the First Jhana are also destroyed.

During the period of destruction by water, the realms of the First and Second Jhanas are also destroyed.

During the period of destruction by the wind: the First, Second, and Third Jhanas are also destroyed.

Of all the Form Brahma beings in the first nine Form Brahma realms, the Subhakinha beings have the longest lifespan. Their lifespan is 64 Kappas or 64 earth ages. For Brahma beings that can live to the full 64 Kappas, it means that they have to be reborn in the Subhakinha Realm precisely at the beginning of the Kappa. Those who are reborn later will have a slightly shorter lifespan since at the end of the 64th Kappa, the realms of the Third Jhana will be destroyed by the wind along with the annihilation of the rest of the universe. However, the Vehapphala realm is not destroyed by fire, water, or wind; therefore, the Vehapphala beings always live to the full 500 Kappas or 500 earth ages.

11. The Asannisatta Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess no mental factors (the absence of feeling, perception, volition, consciousness) but possess only the physical form. That is, they have removed from themselves all outward senses or outside acknowledgement but the removal of defilements is not yet complete. They possess a most beautiful form and complexion. They look like a gold Buddha Image and assume only the three positions of sitting, lying down, or standing depending on the position they were in at death as a human being. They assume this completely still position for the duration of their lifespan. They are also referred to as 'Winter melon Brahma beings' because they are immovable. The Asannisatta Brahma beings are considered to be unfortunate because they cannot attain enlightenment during their existence here. Their lifespan is the same as the Brahma beings in the Vehapphala Realm; it is 500 Kappas or 500 earth ages.

The realms of the Fourth Jhana are located high up in the air above the realms of the Third Jhana. The Brahma beings in these two Jhanas can see each other as well as the Brahma beings in the lower realms. However Brahma beings in the First and Second Jhanas cannot see those in the realms of higher Jhanas.

The Form Brahma Beings in these eleven realms albeit their great lifespan will still have to cease to be from their Brahma states one day. As long as they have not yet attained any of the stages of holiness. In fact, they may have to spend time in the States of Unhappiness afterward as a result of their past negative Kamma. Ultimately, all their Brahma possessions and powers, all their radiances, and their great lifespan cannot help them.

The Five Realms of Suddhavas: These realms are the dwelling of individuals that have attained the third stage of holiness called ‘Anagami’ or ‘Non-Returner’. The realms are separated according to the strength of their inhabitants’ perfections based on such faculties as faith, endeavor, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment.

12. The Avihassuddhavas Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess the weakest faculties. Their faith is by far the most outstanding of all their faculties. Brahma beings of this realm do not leave their abodes in that they must live out the duration of their lifespan. Their Brahma possessions remain constant and full throughout their lifespan of 1,000 Kappas or 1,000 earth ages. However, Brahma beings in the higher four realms may not live out their full lifespan but may choose to cease to be sooner.

13. The Atappasuddhavas Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess stronger faculties but their perseverance is more outstanding than other faculties. Brahma beings of this realm experience no anxiety at all because they are immersed in the raptures of their meditative attainments. They experience only peace and tranquility. Their lifespan is 2,000 Kappas or 2,000 earth ages.

14. The Sudassasuddhavas Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess even stronger faculties but their mindfulness is more outstanding than other faculties. Brahma beings of this realm can see everything clearly because they possess a myriad of pure visual abilities¹, which include regular eyes, celestial eye, Dhamma eye, and wisdom eye. Brahma beings of this realm possess a very beautiful form that delights anyone that sees it. The word ‘Sudassa’ means someone that gives delight to whoever sees them. Their lifespan is 4,000 Kappas or 4,000 earth ages.

15. The Sudassisuddhavas Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess very strong faculties and concentration is more outstanding than other faculties. Brahma beings of this realm can see everything clearly and easily. Their sights are superior to those of the Sudassa Brahma beings in the areas of regular eyes, celestial eye, and wisdom eye. Only the Dhamma eye is similar. Their lifespan is 8,000 Kappas or 8,000 earth ages.

16. The Akanitthasuddhavas Realm: This realm is the dwelling of Brahma beings that possess the strongest faculties and discernment is more outstanding than other faculties. Brahma beings of this realm possess the greatest Brahma possessions and happiness. They have the greatest personal attributes of all the Brahma beings in the Form Brahma Realm. Form Brahma Beings of the first four realms of Suddhavas, while they have not yet attained enlightenment, will not be reborn in the same realm but in a higher realm and never in a lower realm. However, the Akanittha Brahma beings will never be reborn anywhere else. They will definitely enter upon the eternal bliss of Nibbana after this existence. Their lifespan is 16,000 Kappas or 16,000 earth ages.

¹ Regular eyes: The physical eyes

Celestial eye: The eye of higher knowledge. The ability to see things a great distance away as well as very miniscule things.

Dhamma eye: the eye of the Stream Winner, the Once-Returner, and the Non-Returner

Wisdom eye: the eye of Vipassana knowledge, and other higher knowledges.

In the Akanitthasuddhavas Realm, there is a very important holy shrine which is called 'Dussa Cetiya'. It contains the royal attire of Prince Siddhatha just before he became a monk and later became enlightened as our Lord Gautama Buddha. It was the Brahma being named 'Ghatikara' of this realm that brought the eight items of necessity to the prince and brought back his attire to be kept at the 'Dussa Cetiya'. The Cetiya is about 190 kilometers high.

The five realms of Suddhavas only come into existence when there is the happening of a Buddha on earth because they are the dwelling of the Non-Returners. The reason is if no Confirmed Bodhisatta becomes enlightened as a Buddha, there cannot be any Non-Returners. These special realms occur naturally as a result of the birth of the Buddhist Faith. The duration of Suddhavas does not exceed the total lifespan of the Brahma beings in its five realms, which is about 31,000 Kappas or 31,000 earth ages. All individuals that have attained any of the four stages of holiness wherever they may be currently will all enter Nibbana. Therefore, Suddhavas will eventually disappear and will come into existence again only when there is the happening of a new Buddha on earth. Such is its cycle of existence.

The student has learnt that a rebirth in the Brahma Realm occurs because during the individual's human existence, he has regularly performed wholesome deeds of merit. These wholesome deeds include the giving of alms, the observation of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation. Especially in the area of meditation practice, the individual has to be extremely diligent and consistent in order for the Jhana to be attained. As a result, he will have his rebirth in the Brahma Realm after he dies. He can then enjoy the happiness of his Brahma possessions, which will vast, refined, and elaborate. He can also enjoy a lifespan that is many times longer than that in the Celestial Realm.

However, the great lifespan of the Brahma Realm can also be viewed as a disadvantage because it reduces the frequency of one's rebirth in the Human Realm. Therefore, the opportunities to accumulate more and more merit are reduced. A large number of Brahma beings miss the opportunity to meet the Lord Buddha. In some cases, ten or a hundred Buddhas have already come and gone without the knowledge of these Brahma beings. It means that they have lost all opportunities to listen to the Dhamma and will have to continue to undergo the ceaseless round of rebirth of Samsara forever more. They will have to wait until they meet the Lord Buddha and listen to the Dhamma before they can liberate themselves from suffering. That is, once they have pursued their perfections to the fullest extent.

The Life Spans of Form Brahma Beings in All Sixteen Realms

Form Brahma Beings	Their Lifespan
1. The Parisajja realm	1/3 Vivattathaayii Asonkikappa
2. The Purohita realm	1/2 Vivattathaayii Asonkikappa
3. The Mahabrahma realm	1 Vivattathaayii Asonkikappa
4. The Parittabha realm	2 Mahaa-Kappa or 2 earth ages
5. The Appamanabha realm	4 Mahaa-Kappa or 4 earth ages
6. The Abhassara realm	8 Mahaa-Kappa or 8 earth ages
7. The Parittasubha realm	16 Mahaa-Kappa or 16 earth ages
8. The Appamanasubha realm	32 Mahaa-Kappa or 32 earth ages
9. The Subhakinha realm	64 Mahaa-Kappa or 64 earth ages
10. The Vehapphala realm	500 Mahaa-Kappa or 500 earth ages
11. The Asannisatta realm	500 Mahaa-Kappa or 500 earth ages
12. The Avihassuddhavas realm	1,000 Mahaa-Kappa or 1,000 earth ages
13. The Atappasuddhavas realm	2,000 Mahaa-Kappa or earth ages
14. The Sudassasuddhavas realm	4,000 Mahaa-Kappa or earth ages
15. The Sudassisuddhavas realm	8,000 Mahaa-Kappa or earth ages
16. The Akanitthasuddhavas realm	16,000 Mahaa-Kappa or earth ages

CHAPTER 6

THE NON-FORM BRAHMA REALM

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 6

THE NON-FORM BRAHMA REALM

6.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Non-Form Brahma Realm’

6.2 The Realms Contained in the Non-Form Brahma Realm

CONCEPTS

The Non-Form Brahma Realm is part of the three spheres which include the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, and the Non-Form Sphere. It is the dwelling of all the Non-Form Brahma beings. Rebirth in the Non-Form Brahma Realm occurs when during the individual's human existence, he has regularly practiced alms-giving and Precepts observing. Moreover, he has practiced meditation so diligently and consistently that he has attained the Arupajhana or the Four Absorptions of the Non-Form Sphere. After he dies, he has a rebirth in the Non-Form Brahma Realm, which is located high above the Form Brahma Realm.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the lifestyle, and the location of each of the Non-Form Brahma realms.
2. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning and characteristics of the Non-Form Brahma Beings in each of the Non-Form Brahma realms.

THE NON-FORM BRAHMA REALM

Introduction

The Non-Form Brahma Realm is the dwelling of Non-Form Brahma Beings. Rebirth in the Non-Form Brahma Realm occurs because during the individual's human existence, he was able to attain the Arupajhana. After he dies, he has a rebirth in a particular Non-Form Brahma realm as determined by the level of his Jhana strength. The Non-Form Brahma Realm consists of four different realms. The Non-Form Brahma possessions are many times more refined and elaborate than those in the Form Brahma Realm. The personal radiance of Non-form Brahma Beings differs depending on the realm they are in. Non-Form Brahma Beings of a higher realm possess a brighter and more elaborate personal radiance than those in the lower realms. Their lifespan is also longer.

6.1 The Meaning of the Term 'Non-Form Brahma Realm'

The Non-Form Brahma Realm is the dwelling of Non-Form Brahma Beings. It is located high above the Form Brahma Realm. It is about 88,128,000 kilometers above the Akanitthasuddhavas Realm. The Brahma possessions of the Non-Form Brahma Realm are many times more exquisite and elaborate than those in the Form Brahma Realm.

Non-Form Brahma Beings possess an exquisite form that is much more beautiful, elaborate and refined than that of the Form Brahma Beings. Rebirth in the Non-Form Brahma Realm is a result of one's Jhana attainments during one's human existence. These Jhana attainments are called the Absorptions of the Non-Form Sphere. These Jhana attainments are above and beyond the Absorptions of the Form Sphere and are very stable. The Non-Form Brahma Beings are considered unfortunate because they are not capable of attaining enlightenment just as the Brahma beings in the Asannisatta Brahma realm are not.

6.2 The Realms Contained in the Non-Form Brahma Realm

The student has already learnt that a rebirth in the Non-Form Brahma Realm is a result of one's diligent and consistent meditation practice until the Absorptions of the

Non-Form Sphere are attained. Upon the individual's death, he has a rebirth in the Non-Form Brahma Realm.

The Non-Form Brahma Realm is divided into four realms in accordance with the strengths of Jhana attainments. The lower levels reflect lower strengths of the Jhana attainments whereas the highest level is for those with the strongest Jhana attainments.

1. The Akasanancayatana Realm (the Realm of Infinite Space): This realm is the dwelling of individuals that have attained the Akasanancayatana Jhana or the First Non-Form Jhana. That is, they have achieved their Jhana attainments by focusing on infinite space. This realm is located at a distance of 88,128,000 kilometers above the Akanitthasuddhavas Realm. The lifespan of its inhabitants is 20,000 Kaps or 20,000 earth ages.

2. The Vinnanancayatana Realm (the Realm of Infinite Consciousness): This realm is the dwelling of individuals that have attained the Vinnanancayatana Jhana or the Second Non-Form Jhana. That is, they have achieved their Jhana attainments by focusing on space. This realm is located at a distance of 88,128,000 kilometers above the Akasanancayatana Realm. The lifespan of its inhabitants is 40,000 Kaps or 40,000 earth ages.

3. The Akincannayatana Realm (the Realm of Nothingness): This realm is the dwelling of individuals that have attained the Akincannayatana Jhana or the Third Non-Form Jhana. That is, they have achieved their Jhana attainments by focusing on emptiness. This realm is located at a distance of 88,128,000 kilometers above the Vinnanancayatana Realm. The lifespan of its inhabitants is 60,000 Kaps or 60,000 earth ages.

The ascetic 'Alara Kalamagotra', who was once Prince Siddhattha's teacher when He was searching for the Truth, has a rebirth in this realm.

4. The Nevasannanasannayatana Realm (the Realm of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception): This realm is the dwelling of individuals that have attained the Nevasannanasannayatana Jhana or the Fourth Non-Form Jhana. That is, they have achieved their Jhana attainments by focusing on total stillness. This realm is located at a distance of 88,128,000 kilometers above the Akincannayatana Realm. It is the highest of the Non-Form Brahma realms and the highest realm of the three spheres. The lifespan of its inhabitants is 84,000 Kaps or 84,000 earth ages.

The ascetic 'Uddaka Ramaputra', who was once Prince Siddhattha's teacher when He was searching for the Truth, has a rebirth in this realm.

Conclusion

The student has now learnt that rebirth in the Non-Form Brahma Realm occurs as a result of the individual's accumulation of wholesome deeds during his human existence especially in the area of meditation practice. He has practiced meditation until he attains the Non-Form Jhanas, which are more elevated than the Form Jhanas.

When he dies, he then has a rebirth in the Non-Form Brahma Realm and enjoys the greatest lifespan there. Because of the great lifespan of the Non-Form Brahma Realm, it is nearly impossible for them to meet the Buddha. Although one thousand or ten thousand Buddhas have appeared on earth, these Non-Form Brahma Beings are still living in their Non-Form Brahma Realm. They miss the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma and it is far more difficult for these beings to attain enlightenment than the Form Brahma Beings. Therefore, they are considered unfortunate beings because they cannot attain enlightenment during their existence as a Non-Form Brahma Being. Once their lifespan is up, they will have to continue to undergo the round of birth. It is uncertain where their next rebirth will be. They may be reborn as a celestial or human being. Or they may be reborn in the state of loss and woe. It all depends on their overall past Kamma.

Therefore, we must not to live our life recklessly so that we can be safe from the state of loss and woe. The student should accumulate more and more merit in the forms of alms-giving, Precepts observing, and meditation practice. Along with these wholesome deeds, the student should wish to be freed from suffering. He/she should wish for the opportunity to meet the Lord Buddha and for the opportunity to meet a ‘Kalayanamit’ or true friend that can guide him to perform only wholesome deeds of merit.

CHAPTER 7

THE LOKUTTARA REALM

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 7 THE LOKUTTARA REALM

7.1 Basic Understanding about the Lokuttara Realm (the Supramundane Plane)

- 7.1.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Lokuttara Realm’
- 7.1.2 Relevant Vocabulary

7.2 The Sodapannalokuttara Realm (Sodapanna: the Stream Enterer)

- 7.2.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Sodapannalokuttara Realm’
- 7.2.2 The Unusual Virtues of Sodapannas
- 7.2.3 Types of Sodapannas
- 7.2.4 Sodapannas Journey within Two Spheres

7.3 The Sakadagamilokuttara Realm (Sakadagami: the Once-Returner)

- 7.3.1 The Maning of the Term ‘Sakadagamilokuttara Realm’
- 7.3.2 The Unusual Virtues of Sakadagamis
- 7.3.3 Types of Sakadagamis

7.4 The Anagamilokuttara Realm (Anagami: the Non-Returner)

- 7.4.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Anagamilokuttara Realm’
- 7.4.2 The Unusual Virtues of Anagamis
- 7.4.3 Types of Anagamis

7.5 The Arahatlakuttara Realm (Arahat: One That Has Attained Nibbana)

- 7.5.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Arahatlakuttara Realm’
- 7.5.2 The Unusual Virtues of the Arahat
- 7.5.3 Types of Arahats

CONCEPTS

1. The Sotapanna Realm is the first of the Lokuttara realms. These realms are above the three spheres and belong to individuals that have attained the Stream of Nibbana. The Sotapannas are individuals that have attained the initial stage of holiness. Their unusual virtues have to do with the fact that they are able to rid themselves of the three Fetters that bind man to the round of rebirth. These three Fetters include Sakkayaditthi (a belief in a personal self), Vicikiccha (skepticism), and Silabbataparamasa (a belief in the efficacy of religious ceremonies and rituals). The Sotapannas have no more than seven rebirths left before they attain Nibbana.

2. The Sakadagami Realm is the second of the Lokuttara realms. This realm is above the three spheres and is the dwelling of the Once-Returners. To become a Once-Returner, one must go through the initial stage of holiness as a Sotapanna. The unusual virtues of the Once-Returners are the fact that they can lighten the grip of two additional Fetters above those of the Sotapannas. These include Kamaraga (sensual lust), and Patigha (ill-will).

3. The Anagami Realm is the third of the Lokuttara realms. To become a Non-Returner, one must go through the initial stages of holiness as a Sotapanna and a Sakadagami through one's meditation practice. The unusual virtues of the Non-Returners are the fact that they can completely rid themselves of the first five Fetters. As Non-Returners, after they leave the Human Realm, they will have a rebirth in one of the five Suddavas realms of the Form Brahma Realm. They will attain the Arahatship and enter Nibbana from there without ever having to return to the Human Realm again.

4. The Arahat Realm is the last and highest realm of the Lokuttara Realm. This is the highest aim of all human beings. To attain the Arahatship, the individual must continue his meditation practice beyond the first three stages of holiness. The unusual virtues of Arahats are the fact that they can completely rid themselves of all ten Fetters. The last five Fetters include Rupa-raga (craving for form), Arupa-raga (craving for non-form), Mana (conceit), Uddhacca (restlessness), and Avijja (ignorance). Once all the defilements have been completely removed, one becomes an Arahat. He has completed the real work of a human being. He is pure in body, in words, and in thoughts. He is worthy of worship, for he is truly a holy person.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the unusual virtues, and the types of Sotapannas.
2. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the unusual virtues, and the types of Sakadagamis.
3. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the unusual virtues, and the types of Anagamis.
4. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the unusual virtues, and the types of Arahats.

THE LOKUTTARA REALM

Introduction

In the last six chapters the student has learnt about the Hereafter, which is the dwelling of all beings after they depart from the Human Realm. These three spheres (the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, and the Non-Form Sphere) are places where the ceaseless round of rebirth takes place. The Human Realm is the center of these three spheres and is the place for accumulating merit and sin. The four states of loss and woe or the four states of misery are the Hereafter of those that habitually commit unwholesome deeds. The Celestial Realm, the Form Brahma Realm, and the Non-Form Brahma Realm are the Hereafter of individuals that habitually perform wholesome deeds. However, the realms of these three spheres still fall under the dictate of the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of self (cannot be controlled by the self). The three spheres as mentioned in the last six chapters are considered as the mundane realms. They are the realms of existence for ordinary beings that still have to undergo the round of rebirth and experience an endless cycle of happiness and suffering.

In this chapter, the student will learn about the Lokuttara Realm or the Supramundane Realm. It is the dwelling of holy beings and is above the three spheres. These holy beings are on a direct path to rid them completely of all defilements and enter Nibbana, which is the highest aim of all human beings.

7.1 Basic Understanding about the Lokuttara Realm

Here the student will gain a basic understanding about the Lokuttara Realm so that he/she can correctly understand its meaning, its relevant vocabulary, and its certain aspects. The preliminary understanding will enable the student to better learn the details of the chapter.

7.1.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Lokuttara Realm’

The Lokuttara Realm is above the three spheres, which include the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, and the Non-Form Sphere. It is the dwelling of holy individuals that have ridden themselves completely of certain categories of defilements. The Lokuttara Realm also includes the incomparable Nibbana, which consists of the Four Paths, the Four Fruits, and Nibbana. These nine aspects are called the Nine Lokuttaradhamma or The Nine Supramundane States. The knowledge of Lokuttaradhamma is crucially important and every human being must come to know it because Nibbana is the highest aim in life.

7.1.2 Relevant Vocabulary

It is necessary that the student learns the relevant vocabulary well in order to gain an initial understanding about the Lokuttara Realm.

Ordinary Individuals: Individuals that are still thick with defilements and imply everyone that still falls under the dictate of his defilements in the forms of greed, anger, and ignorance. In this sense, ordinary individuals include all human and celestial beings that have not yet attained any of the stages of holiness.

Holy Individuals (Saint): Individuals that is distant from defilements. They include individuals that have attained the different stages of holiness such as the Path of Sôdapanna or Stream Enterer. They can abstain from all unwholesome deeds and are willing to lay down their lives for the sake of keeping their holiness intact. They are pure in their body, their words, and their thoughts. For these reasons they are called holy individuals regardless of whether they are monks or lay individuals, human beings or celestial beings.

Anusaya (The Seven Evil Inclinations): These are latent defilements that lie deep within every ordinary individual's nature and include:

1. Kamaraga: Sensual lust
2. Patigha: Ill will
3. Ditthi: Erroneous belief
4. Vicikiccha: Skepticism
5. Mana: Conceit
6. Bhavaraga: Craving for existence
7. Avijja: Ignorance

Samyojana (The Ten Fetters that Bind Man to the Round of rebirth): They are defilements that bind the mind of all beings to the ten causes of suffering. They can be divided into the Lower Five Fetters and the Upper Five Fetters as follows:

The Lower Five Fetters:

1. Sakkayaditthi: Belief in a personal self
2. Vicikiccha: Skepticism
3. Silabbataparamasa: Belief in the efficacy of religious ceremonies or rituals
4. Kamachanda: Sensual Desire
5. Bayapad: Malevolence

The Upper Five Fetters:

6. Rupa-raga: Craving for form
7. Arupa-raga: Craving for non-form
8. Mana: Conceit
9. Uddhacca: Restlessness
10. Avijjia: Ignorance

7.2 The Sodapannalokuttara Realm

This is the dwelling of Sodapannas. It is the beginning or the first level of the Lokuttara Realm and is one of the four realms of Lokuttara.

7.2.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Sodapannalokuttara Realm’

This realm is beyond the three spheres and is the dwelling of individuals that have attained the Stream of Nibbana. Its inhabitants are noble individuals that have attained the initial stage of holiness and they have unwavering faith in the Triple Gem. Their Precepts are perfectly observed. They are considered one of the eight categories of individuals worthy of our worship.

The attainments of the Dhammakayas through the meditative practice of the Most Honorable Pramonkolthepmuni (Sod Candasaro) allowed him to further explain to us that one becomes a Sodapanna by attaining the Sodapanna Dhammakaya that exists within the center of all human beings.

7.2.2 The Unusual Virtues of Sodapannas

It was recorded that during the time of our Lord Buddha, a large number of people had attained the Sodapanna state. They were monks as well as lay individuals. The attainment of the Sodapanna state can be ascertained by the fact that one can rid oneself completely of defilements. In this case they are the first three of the Five Lower Fetters as follows:

- 1. Sakkayaditthi:** Belief in a personal self. It is the belief that the personal self exists. It is the belief that the physical form is of the self, the feeling is of the self, etc.
- 2. Vicikiccha:** Skepticism about the Triple Gem and other wholesome laws.
- 3. Silabbataparamasa:** An exclusive belief in the efficacy of religious ceremonies or rituals, i.e. a belief in the purifying and releasing effect of certain practices such as practicing the habits of a cow, lying on a bed of nails, etc.

7.2.3 Types of Sodapannas

As mentioned earlier that Sodapannas can rid themselves completely of only three Fetters. In spite of this fact, they can seriously cut short their round of rebirth. This is in accordance with the law that governs the path of enlightenment, which states that a Sodapanna does not have more than seven rebirths left. There are three types of Sodapannas as follows:

Type 1: Akabijisodapannas – They have only one more rebirth left. They have the most direct access to the Bliss of Emancipation, which is Nibbana. In the next rebirth, as soon as they have the opportunity to practice meditation, they will become enlightened as an Arahat. As Arahats, it means that they have attained the highest level of holiness.

Type 2: Kolankolasodapannas – They have two to three more rebirths left before becoming enlightened as an Arahat.

Type 3: Sattakkhattuparamasodapannas – They have no more than seven rebirths left before becoming enlightened as an Arahat.

The reason there are three types of Sodapannas is that there are differences in each individual's level of accumulated merit and pursuit of perfections. There are also differences in each individual's level of discipline in terms of their sense-faculties. An individual whose pursuit of perfections has been especially intense and the training of their sense-faculties, which include faith, endeavor, awareness, concentration, and discernment, has been equally intense can attain enlightenment quickly. This is the case with Akabijisodapannas.

7.2.4 Sodapannas Journey within the Two Spheres

Sodapannas are individuals that have trained themselves rigorously and have accumulated a vast amount of merit. These two parameters play a key role in the complete removal from their nature the Three Fetters with only residual defilements remaining. They will never fall foul and have a rebirth in the states of loss and woe again. They have completely closed the gateway to the states of loss and woe because of their permanently clear and bright consciousness. They will have a rebirth either in the Human Realm or the Celestial Realm. As a celestial being, they will possess tremendous celestial possessions, which include celestial castles, celestial attendants, etc. They will have other high-ranking celestial beings as friends. In the Pramoggalana Sutta there were recorded examples of such Sodapannas as abbreviated below.

Once, the Most Venerable Moggalana (one of the Lord Buddha's two Chief Disciples) went to visit the Brahma estate of the Mahabrahma being 'Tissa'. The great Moggalana found out that during the Brahma being's human existence; he was a Buddhist monk that has attained the Jhanas. After his death, he had a rebirth in the Brahma Realm. During the great Moggalana's visit, he took the opportunity to ask the Mahabrahman 'Tissa' the following question. "Of all the celestial beings that you know and of all the celestial realms, which realm contains Sodapannas that will never degenerate but will definitely attain enlightenment in the future."

The Mahabrahma being 'Tissa' answered, "I can see that there are Sodapannas in all six celestial realms from the Catumaharajika to the Paranimmitavasavatti realms. These individuals will never degenerate and will definitely attain enlightenment in the future."

This conversation shows that Sodapannas can have a rebirth in all six celestial realms. They will never degenerate by having a rebirth in the States of Unhappiness and will most certainly attain enlightenment in the future. After their existence in the Celestial Realm, they will definitely have a subsequent rebirth in the Human Realm. During their human existence, they will continue to accumulate merit and practice meditation until they can attain a more advanced stage of holiness. For them, enlightenment can take place in either the Human Realm or the Celestial Realm.

7.3 The Sakadagamilokuttara Realm

This realm is the second of the Lokuttara realms and is attained only after the Sodapanna Realm is realized.

7.3.1 The Meaning of the Term 'Sakadagamilokuttara Realm'

This realm is above the three spheres and its inhabitants will only have one rebirth left. Individuals of the Sakadagamilokuttara Realm have attained the second stage of holiness. During their one remaining rebirth, they will attain enlightenment and enter Nibbana.

In terms of the meditative attainments through the Dhammakayas, the Most Venerable Pramonkolthepmuni (Sod Candasaro) described individuals of this Realm as having attained the Sakadagami Dhammakaya that exists within the center of our being.

7.3.2 The Unusual Virtues of Sakadagamis

During the times of our Lord Buddha, there were a large number of people that became Sodapannas. They included Buddhist monks and lay people. There were also a great number of individuals that became Sakadagamis. Sodapannas possess the unusual virtues of being able to completely rid themselves of the three Lower Fetters. These include Sakkayaditthi, Vicikiccha, and Silabbataparamasa. But Sakadagamis can purify their minds further by minimizing the effect of the remaining two Lower Fetters. These include Kamaraga (sensual lust), and Patigha (ill will). These unusual virtues cause their body, words, and thoughts to be increasingly pure.

7.3.3 Types of Sakadagamis

The student has already learnt that Sakadagamis have only one rebirth left. There are five different types of Sakadagamis that will become enlightened as an Arahant in the future as follows:

Type 1: These include individuals that have become Sakadagamis during their human existence and are now in the Celestial Realm. After they cease to be and have a rebirth in the Human Realm, they will attain the Arahatsip and enter Nibbana.

Type 2: These include individuals that have become Sakadagamis during their human existence and continue to practice meditation until they attain the Arahatsip and enter Nibbana from the Human Realm.

Type 3: These include individuals that have become Sakadagamis during their human existence. During their rebirth as a celestial being, they continue with their meditation practice until they attain the Arahatsip and enter Nibbana from the Celestial Realm.

Type 4: These include celestial beings that have continued to practice meditation until they attain the Arahatsip and enter Nibbana directly from there.

Type 5: These include celestial beings that have become Sakadagamis in the Celestial Realm. After they cease to be and have a rebirth in the Human Realm, the strength of their merit makes it possible for them to attain the Arahatsip once they start to practice meditation. They enter Nibbana from the Human Realm.

7.4 The Anagamilokuttara Realm

This realm is the third of the Lokuttara realms. To become an Anagami, one needs to first attain the Sodapanna and the Sakadagami virtues respectively.

7.4.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Anagamilokuttara Realm’

The Anagamilokuttara Realm is above the three spheres and the Anagamis will no longer have a rebirth in the Sense Sphere. They have attained the third stage of holiness.

In terms of the meditative attainments through the Dhammakayas, the Most Venerable Pramonkolthepmuni (Sod Candasaro) described individuals of this Realm as having attained the Anagami Dhammakaya that exists within the center of our being.

7.4.2 The Unusual Virtues of Anagamis

As mentioned earlier an Anagami needs to attain the virtues of Sodapannas and Sakadagamis before becoming an Anagami. Anagamis have the unusual virtues of being able to completely remove from their beings two more latent evil inclinations above and beyond Sodapannas and Sakadagamis. These include:

1. Kamaraga: Sensual lust.
2. Pathigha: Ill will.

7.4.3 Types of Anagamis

Individuals that have become Anagamis during their human existence will have a rebirth in the Suddavas realms of the Form Brahma Realm after they die. There are five types of Anagamis as follows:

Type 1: Antaraparinibbaya – After their rebirth in one of the Suddavas realms, they will be able to attain the Arahatsip and enter Nibbana within the first half of their lifespan.

Type 2: Upahaccaparinibbaya – After their rebirth in one of the Suddavas realms, they will be able to attain the Arahatsip and enter Nibbana within the second half of their lifespan.

Type 3: Asankharaparinibbaya – After their rebirth in one of the Suddavas realms, they will be able to attain the Arahatsip and enter Nibbana any time without much effort.

Type 4: Sasankharaparinibbaya – After their rebirth in one of the Suddavas realms, they will be able to attain the Arahatsip and enter Nibbana only after a great deal of effort.

Type 5: Uddhansotoakanitthagami – After they die from their human existence they have a rebirth in the lowest of the Suddavas realms, which is called ‘Avihasuddavas’. After they cease to be from this realm, they will have a rebirth in higher Suddavas realms, which include Atappa, Sudassa, Sudassi, and Akanittha, respectively. They will be able to attain the Arahatsip and enter Nibbana at the highest realm as Akanittha Brahma Beings.

7.5 The Arahatslokuttara Realm

The Arahatslokuttara Realm is the last and highest realm of the Lokuttara realms. The Arahatsip is attained after one has become a Sodapanna, a Sakadagami, and an Anagami respectively through higher and higher meditative attainments. An individual that can attain the Arahatsip must have the most penetrating discernment and must be able to completely remove from himself all defilements. An Arahats is worthy of our worship because he is pure and clean in his body, words, and thoughts.

7.5.1 The Meaning of the Term ‘Arahatslokuttara Realm’

The ‘Arahatslokuttara Realm’ is above the three spheres. It is the realm of individuals worthy of our worship because they have attained the highest level of holiness.

In terms of meditative attainments through the Dhammakayas according to the Most Venerable Pramankolthepmuni (Sod Candasaro), an individual attains the Arahatsip by becoming one with the Arahats Dhammakaya that exists within the center of our body.

7.5.2 The Unusual Virtues of Arahats

Arahats have the unusual virtues of being able to rid themselves totally of latent evil inclinations as well as the higher Five Fetters that include:

1. Ruparaga: Craving for form or craving for the Form Sphere
2. Aruparaga: Craving for non-form or craving for the Non-Form Sphere.
3. Mana: Conceit
4. Uddhacca: Restlessness of the mind
5. Avijja: Ignorance of the truth about nature

Therefore Arahats, who can remove completely from their nature both the Five Lower Fetters and the Five Upper Fetters, are considered as being truly worthy of our worship.

7.5.3 Types of Arahats

There are two major types of Arahats:

Type 1: Cetovimutti – The release from defilements and the attainment of enlightenment through the predominant practice of Samatha (tranquility).

Type 2: Pannavimutti – The release from defilements and the attainment of enlightenment through the predominant practice of Vipassana (insight).

These are in accordance with the Lord Buddha's Saying to Ananda in the **Mahalunkayaovada Sutta** as follows:

“Most Enlightened One, if this path or this method is for the purpose of abandoning the Five Upper Fetters, why then should some monks in the faith called Cetovimutti and some are called Pannavimutti?”

“Behold, Ananda, we were talking about the differences in their sense faculties.”

This Sutta indicates the steps involved in attaining enlightenment. Therefore, Arahats can be grouped into two types. Both types of Arahats must first attain the initial phase of ‘Samatha’ that includes the four Form Jhanas and the Three Non-Form Jhanas. The reason for the division into two types is the fact that Cetovimuttiarahats employ their Samatha (tranquility) as the means to remove their lusts whereas Pannavimuttiarahats employ their Vipassana (insight) to remove their ignorance.

Conclusion

The student has now learnt that the Lokuttara Realm is above the three spheres. It is the realm that is beyond the round of rebirth. It contains individuals of different levels of holiness and includes Sodapannas, Sakadagamis, Anagamis, and Arahats.

To attain each stage of holiness, an individual must be able to completely remove certain number of Fetters from his nature. A Sodapanna must be able to rid himself of the first three of the Lower Fetters. To become a Sakadagami, one must first attain the holiness of the Sodapanna and be able to loosen the grip of the last two of the Lower Fetters. In the same manner, An Anagami must first attain the stages of holiness of the Sodapanna and the Sakadagami. To attain Arahatship, one must have already completed the stages of holiness of the Sodapanna, the Sakadagami, and the Anagami. Arahats are the holiest individuals.

These four types of holy individuals are said to have attained the Stream of Nibbana. The first three types of holy individuals penetrate the bliss of Nibbana at the depths according to the stages of their holiness. Since Arahats are devoid of all Fetters, hence all defilements, their experience of the bliss of Nibbana is complete.

For these reasons, the Lokuttara Realm is the most important realm and the Arahatship is the highest goal of all human beings because it signifies the ceasing of the round of rebirth of Samsara. The student should then endeavor to train himself toward this highest of goals.

CHAPTER 8 NIBBANA

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 8 NIBBANA

8.1 The Reality of Nibbana

8.2 The Concepts of a Wise Individual

8.3 The Meaning of Nibbana

8.4 Types of Nibbana

8.5 Desirable Characteristics of Nibbana

8.6 Preparation for Nibbana

8.7 The Practice of Meditation for the Purpose Nibbana

CONCEPTS

Nibbana means the end of the round of rebirth of Samsara. It is the highest goal of all human beings because it is a place of holiness and it is the dwelling of holy entities that include the Buddhas and all the Arahats. It is a place that is completely devoid of suffering. It is permanent and unchanging. Whoever has attained Nibbana is automatically removed from the round of rebirth and no longer has to undergo the everlasting birth-death-rebirth cycle of Samsara.

As a human being, should one regularly commit unwholesome deeds, one is destined to suffer for an unimaginably long time in the states of loss and woe. Should one perform and accumulate wholesome deeds without the clear goal of attaining Nibbana, his intact defilements will cause him to have a rebirth in the Celestial Realm, the Form Brahma Realm, or the Non-Form Brahma Realm. After his term in one of the States of Happiness is up he will be reborn as a human being and the whole cycle begins once again on and on for eternity.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning and the types of Nibbana.
2. To enable the student to correctly describe the practices aimed toward Nibbana.

NIBBANA

Introduction

All beings abhor suffering and desire only happiness especially everlasting, unchanging happiness. Such happiness can only be found in Nibbana. Therefore, the attainment of Nibbana is the noblest goal of all beings. Once an individual has the opportunity to learn and understand this noblest of all goals, he can then correctly design his life and live his life accordingly. As long as one must continue to undergo the round of rebirth, one can at least do it like a winner.

In this chapter, the student will learn about Nibbana. It is the highest level of the Lokuttara realms and the highest goal of all human beings. The student will learn the meaning, the types, the desirable characteristics, and the noble aspiration of working toward Nibbana.

8.1 The Reality of Nibbana

Many Buddhists are of the wrong view that Nibbana does not exist or it is far too removed from their lives or it is impossible for anyone else to attain it. Some Buddhists believe the reality of Nibbana but understand it to be the domain of Buddhist monks only. They believe Nibbana is not the concern of lay individuals and they need not know anything about it. Such beliefs are of course incorrect. Moreover, many 'so called' Buddhists even question the reality of the fruit of Kamma and the reality of heaven and hell. Some Buddhists go so far as to deny the reality of heaven and hell without having ever looked for answers in the right source. In other words, these people have never really studied the Lord Buddha's Teachings in. For if they have, they will find from the Tripitaka and other Buddhist Scriptures that the Lord Buddha confirmed the reality of Nibbana, which can be accessed through the Dhammakaya.

In spite of the Lord Buddha's affirming and truthful words, it is still not easy to make anyone understand Nibbana. The reason is it is attainable only by holy individuals that are completely devoid of defilements and it can only be accessed by the Dhamma Eye. This scenario can be compared to the people in the old days that had no understanding about germs and believed their illnesses to be caused by supernatural forces such as ghosts, etc. It was not until a smart individual invented a microscope and could prove that germs existed that people understood the theory about microbes. The general public can now believe in the existence of germs not because they see them with their own eyes through a microscope but because educated people such as physicians, researchers, etc., could see them. Evidence in the form of the microscope coupled with the professionals involved has rendered credence to the reality of the microbes' existence.

In Buddhism, cultivating the Dhamma Eye is something one must do for oneself. It is not possible to invent the Dhamma Eye and provide or lend it to others for their use. Each individual has to develop his own Dhamma Eye by purifying and training his mind and by studying with a knower that has already been successful in developing his own Dhamma Eye. Such worthwhile endeavor requires diligent and dedicated efforts in following the practice of the knower. Such training involves one's body, words, and thoughts in accordance with the Precepts, concentration, and discernment. Most importantly, the mind has to be trained to gain focus, calmness, and brightness until it is further and further removed from defilements. The calmer and brighter our mind becomes, the more confident we will be of Nibbana because we are approaching the perfect state that is Nibbana. The further the mind is removed from defilements, the brighter it will become. It is when our mind becomes very bright that we can gain an appreciation of the holiest state of Nibbana.

8.2 The Concepts of a Wise Individual

In general, people only believe in the things that they can sense with the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and touch. They disbelieve anything that they cannot witness through these physical means. Such a narrow view is unfortunate because it prevents one from learning the deeper aspects of reality. This narrow view does not accommodate the fact that there is a most powerful sensor called the mind that is far more superior to the five physical senses. A trained mind can penetrate information far above and beyond the five physical senses. Therefore, in order to fully develop our intellect, we need to understand the concepts and practices of the knowers in the past. These concepts and practices are described in the **Apannaka Sutta** as abbreviated below.

1. If there are two groups of monks, one group believes that the giving of alms does not bear any fruit, there is no such thing as merit or sin or its corresponding fruit, this world is not real, and there is no hereafter, etc. Another group has a totally opposite view. On what basis can we even begin to consider their opposite views? Wise men of the past would reserve their judgment, since they had no way of ascertaining either view. They thought if the giving of alms, merit, and sin bore no fruit, how was it that they could already witness how immoral individuals were shunned and were not respected by the learned and the wise. And if the hereafter existed they could understand how these immoral individuals would receive the ill consequences of their misdeeds there. They also thought that virtuous individuals were admired and respected. Should the hereafter exist, they would certainly reap their rewards in the realm of happiness.
2. If there are two groups of monks, one group believes that there are no such things as the Non-Form Brahma Beings but another group believes the opposite is true. In this case, wise men of the past would reserve their judgment but they also thought that they could practice meditation until they could attain the Jhanas. If afterward it should be that Non-Form Brahma Beings did not exist, at least they would be reborn as a Form Brahma Being but if the Non-Form Brahma Beings existed then they would be reborn as a Non-Form Brahma Being.
3. If there are two groups of monks, one group believes that the complete removal of defilements that results in the state of Nibbana cannot happen but another group believes the opposite is true. In this case, wise men of the past would reserve their judgment. They thought however that they could at least practice meditation until they could attain the

absorptions of the Non-Form Sphere. If the first group was correct, they would be reborn as Non-Form Brahma Beings in accordance with their Jhana attainments. But if the second group was correct and Nibbana existed, then their meditative attainments should bring them closer Nibbana.

The belief that the ceasing of the round of rebirth or Nibbana does not exist comes from those that subscribe to a set of beliefs that are mixed with sensual pleasures. These beliefs formed the bondage that perpetuated the round of rebirth for the believers.

The belief that the ceasing of the round of rebirth or Nibbana exists comes from those subscribing to the truth that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures, or to the Fetters that trap beings within the sticky web of Samsara. These men of wisdom choose the path that will ultimately free them from the vice of sensual pleasures, and from the grip of the round of rebirth.

From the Sutta, we learn that wise men of old thought and practiced a certain way. They might initially have doubts about something but they did not totally rule out its possibility. They did however study and practice accordingly until they could witness the truth for themselves. Therefore, the student needs to practice according to the sages of old by starting to practice meditation in order to witness the truth for himself. Even if he cannot yet succeed in this existence, the practice will give him a good foundation that will remain with him through the next existence.

8.3 The Meaning of Nibbana

There are a few words that are associated with Nibbana and may be a cause for confusion. In the Tripitaka, the Lord Buddha described its meaning in different ways. The Commentary added more descriptive terms. Some will be mentioned here to allow the student to glimpse a deeper meaning of Nibbana from different angles.

a) The Meaning of Nibbana according to the Tripitaka

The first meaning: The removal of lust, anger, and ignorance. Such is the state of Nibbana. Therefore, Nibbana is described as the termination of defilements.

The second meaning: Nibbana means the complete abandonment of craving

The third meaning: Nibbana means the termination of lust, anger, and ignorance.

The fourth meaning: Nibbana means the termination of all bondage.

The fifth meaning: It is difficult to penetrate the state that is Nibbana. It is the termination of all Kamma formations. It is the end of craving. It is the freedom from sensual pleasures. It is the end of suffering.

b) The Meaning of Nibbana according to the Commentary

The first meaning: Nibbana is also referred to as Bodhi (enlightenment).

The second meaning: Nibbana is called Vimutti (emancipation).

The third meaning: Nibbana is devoid of lust, anger, and ignorance.

The meaning of Nibbana as gleaned from the Tripitaka and the Commentary can be summarized as follows:

Nibbana means tranquility. Nibbana is completely devoid of the five senses and all defilements, which are the causes of all suffering. Such interpretation indicates any nature that is devoid of the five senses and all defilements is categorized as Nibbana.

The nature of Nibbana can be described in accordance with the Tripitaka and the current knowers as follows:

1. A mind that is free from all fetters is the mind that can penetrate Nibbana.
2. An individual that is free from all fetters can attain Nibbana. Such individuals include the Sodapannas and all the way up to the Arahats.
3. The state of emancipation is the true state of Nibbana.

These definitions allow the student to understand that they all mean Nibbana should he comes across these terms in his future study of the Tripitaka or other Buddhist Scriptures.

8.4 Types of Nibbana

The student should first understand that there is only one state of Nibbana but the types are given here in order to demonstrate an individual's involvement with Nibbana or specific description of Nibbana. According to the Scripture 'Itivuttaka', there are two elements of Nibbana as follows:

1. **Living Nibbana:** It means the attainment of Nibbana of a live individual.
2. **Dead Nibbana:** It means the attainment of Nibbana of a dead individual.

These two elements of Nibbana can be further described as follows:

1. **Living Nibbana:** It means the attainment of Nibbana by an individual that still retains the five senses of the human body as seen in the example of the enlightenment of Arahats.

This state of existence can be further clarified through the practical information given in the book 'An Abbot's Handbook' by the Most Venerable Pramonkolthepmuni (Sod Cantasaro) in the quotation below.

“Nibbana is the dwelling of the Dhammakayas and is located at the center of the Dhammakaya’s being. This state applies to the Lord Buddha’s human body where He employed His Dhammakaya to gain the meditative attainments of Enlightenment and Nibbana. This type of Nibbana is called ‘Living Nibbana’ because it dwells within the Dhammakaya that lies within the Dhammakayas of the Non-Form Brahma Being, the Form Brahma Being, the Celestial Being and the Refined Human Body respectively. These respective forms contain their specific types of defilements. The state of holiness characteristic of Nibbana that exists amidst these defilements is called ‘Living Nibbana.’”

2. Dead Nibbana: It means the state of Nibbana that is devoid of the five senses of the human body or the state at which all defilements are completely extinguished by the destruction of the five senses. It is attained after an Arahant dies.

This existence can be further clarified through the practical information given in the book ‘An Abbot’s Handbook’ by the Most Venerable Pramankolthepmuni (Sod Candasaro) in the quotation below.

“Nibbana is a sphere of existence that is different from the Six or Twelve Spheres. It is the sphere of existence far superior to and far more refined than all the other spheres of existence but it performs similar functions. That is, the Six or Twelve Spheres trap beings that are still confined in them to remain bound to them through the workings of the five senses. The five senses, which include the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the physical body and the mind, perform their individual duties accordingly by attracting the physical form, the sound, the smell, the taste, the touch, and the mind object. In the same manner Nibbana, which is completely devoid of the five senses, attracts the Buddhas and the Arahants to its sphere of existence.”

Some details of Nibbana are given in the **Dhatu Sutta** as follows:

“I’ve remembered this teaching from the Lord Buddha. Behold, monks, what are the two elements of Nibbana that include the Living Nibbana and the Dead Nibbana?”

Behold, a Buddhist monk that practices the Dhamma Discipline and has attained the final stage of holiness is said to be finished with his endeavors. The reason is he has removed all defilements from his nature. Hence he has attained emancipation from the round of rebirth. Still, he experiences the

feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. He experiences happiness and suffering because the five senses remain with him still. Behold, monks, the complete removal of greed, anger and ignorance from this Buddhist monk is a state that is called the Living Nibbana. When this Buddhist monk dies, the absence of the five senses is complete. He is completely imperturbable. This state is called the Dead Nibbana.”

Although the Sutta provides two descriptive features of Nibbana as relevant to the practitioner, it does not give any detail about the state of Nibbana as a sphere of existence. Such description is not available because it can only be witnessed by the practitioner alone.

To conclude, Nibbana can be categorized in two ways. One way is to describe it as a state that is completely devoid of all defilements, which affects the practitioner in his daily life and daily interaction with the world he lives in. The other way has to do with the unfathomable reality of Nibbana. That is, it cannot be experienced with the five senses because it lies above and beyond them.

8.5 Desirable Characteristics of Nibbana

The Tripitaka makes many mentions of the characteristics of Nibbana but here only the comprehensible aspect of Nibbana will be mentioned.

1. Nibbana is a place of supreme happiness and it is beyond compare

Every being desires happiness. All the struggle, all the frantic searching, and all the striving are for the purpose of finding happiness that hopefully will not turn into suffering later on. Yet, such happiness has not been found. Most of the time, the so-called happiness comes with painful consequences.

The types of happiness, which can be found in the three spheres, arise out of positive mental activities. Such happiness is conditioned by wholesome or unwholesome sensual pleasures or by the Jhana absorptions through meditative attainments. It arises out of sensual craving, craving for rebirth, and craving for non-existence of the mundane state. These three cravings are the Origin of Suffering. Any happiness tainted with these three cravings is conditioned by its temporariness and will eventually turn into suffering. Therefore, it is not true happiness.

Happiness in Nibbana is absolute. **It is not tainted with sensations** or conditioned by the three cravings. Any condition that is not tainted with the three cravings does not change. It is unchangeable. It is permanent. It is everlasting. Therefore, happiness in Nibbana is the greatest happiness of all.

To feel the everlasting bliss of Nibbana in this lifetime may seem almost impossible but we must continue with our endeavors. As long as we have our human form and the Lord Buddha’s Teachings are still available to us, we do have what it takes to experience the everlasting bliss of Nibbana if we but practice correctly. Although our accumulated merit

has not yet reached the point of perfection, our correct practice in this lifetime will allow us to experience gradations of true happiness. We can start out by keeping our mind still and quiet through meditation. Meditation is the pathway that leads to the attainment of the different levels of Jhanas or absorptions. These absorptions start from the first Jhana and continue all the way to the final stage of holiness.

There are many levels of happiness that can be attained through the different levels of Jhana absorptions. Although the details of these elevated meditative states are quite complicated, the Most Venerable Pramonkolthepmuni was able to give us some ideas about them by putting them in practical terms as follows:

“Keep the Jhana clear and bright all the time. Don’t allow it to fade, to deteriorate, or disappear altogether. Remain in the Jhanas and derive happiness from the First Jhana, the Second Jhana, the Third Jhana, and the Fourth Jhana. It is the kind of happiness far superior to the happiness of the world.

Once you have attained the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Jhanas, you will forget the pleasures of the physical form, the sound, the smell, the taste, and the touch. Nothing remains of the physical form, the sound, the smell, the taste, and the touch.

Take the mind of the Form Brahma Being and place it on the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Jhanas until you forget the pleasures of the physical form, the sound, the smell, the taste, and the touch that constantly knock at your heart whether you are awake or asleep.

Continue to elevate your meditative state and experience the Non-Form Jhanas of Akasanancayatana, Vinnanancayatana, Akincannayatana, and Nevasannanasannayatana.

Once the Non-Form Jhanas have been attained, the pleasures of the Form Jhanas are removed and the mind attaches itself to the happiness of the Akasanancayatana, Vinnanancayatana, Akincannayatana, and Nevasannanasannayatana Jhanas. Such happiness can last 84,000 earth ages.

The Nevasannanasannayatana Jhana at the very top of the universe is the source of the most excellent happiness within the three spheres. There is no higher happiness. No other happiness in the three spheres can be compared to the supreme happiness of the Nevasannanasannayatana Jhana.

To attain the uttermost happiness, you must attain the path and the fruit of Nibbana. Individuals that have attained the Dhammakaya have access to Nibbana. They can visit Nibbana with their Dhammakaya and experience for themselves the uttermost happiness there. They can remain still there and experience for a time the uttermost happiness.

Once the uttermost happiness has been experienced, talkative people will become quiet because they no longer have any desire to talk. They feel content, imbued, fulfilled, and moved for having experienced the type of happiness that they have never experienced before.”¹

This quotation affirms the characteristic fruit of meditation practice as true happiness (completely devoid of sensual pleasures). True happiness can be experienced every step of the way in accordance with the level of one’s meditative attainments. The level of true happiness experienced increases with the height of meditative attainments all the way to Nibbana. It is the characteristic happiness that is marked by emancipation from the round of rebirth, from all defilements, and from all fetters.

2. Nibbana is true, everlasting, permanent, unchangeable, and cannot be lost. It is the ultimate reality.

The types of suffering experienced by all beings especially human are the pain of separation, the impermanence of the people and things that we love, and encountering what we dislike be they people, animals, or things. The changeability of our physical form alone causes us to suffer because it is undesirable. We desire what is true, permanent, and unchanging but it cannot be found within the three spheres. The Lord Buddha has ascertained that Nibbana is the only place where permanent bliss prevails.

It is feasible to attain Nibbana as a human being, a celestial being, a Form Brahma Being, or a Non-Form Brahma Being. These physical forms however still suffer the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and the absence of the self. These forms will eventually cease to be and make it not possible for them to enjoy the bliss of Nibbana in the said forms forever. Indeed some Arahats met their death far too soon as in the case of the Most Venerable Bahiya. After he had attained the Arahatship, he went to look for requisite items for his ordination. During his errand, he was attacked by an ox that gored him to death with its horn. There was another case that involved the Most Venerable Godhika. He attained enlightenment and Nibbana while he was slitting his own throat. We know that many individuals have accumulated merit and pursued perfections for 100,000 earth ages or for Asonkis just for the express purpose of attaining the permanent bliss of Nibbana. We also know that the termination of all suffering is the same as experiencing the fruit of Nibbana. For all of our head knowledge about Nibbana, we may wonder how the termination of all suffering can bring about permanent bliss.

¹ The Dhamma Heritage of the Abbot of Wat Paknam.

The simplest way to answer this and other questions about Nibbana can be summed up by saying that Nibbana is not a reality that can be imagined or understood at the intellectual level. At best, we can derive some appreciation about Nibbana from practitioners that have had first-hand experience of this blissful state. We must however begin our own Dhamma practice in earnest by practicing generosity through the giving of alms, by observing the Precepts meticulously, and by practicing meditation regularly. Through these endeavors, we can then have the opportunity to find our own answer in the form of increasing happiness. Here we will provide a description of Nibbana as derived from the practical experience of Vija Dhammakaya by the Most Venerable Pramankolthepmuni (Sod Candasaro) as follows:

“Within each individual there exist 18 coarse and refined physical forms in layers one inside another. These forms include the refined human form, the coarse celestial form, the refined celestial form, the coarse Form Brahma being, the refined Form Brahma being, the coarse Non-Form Brahma being, the refined Non-Form Brahma being, the coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya, the refined Gotrabhu Dhammakaya, the coarse Sodapanna Dhammakaya, the refined Sodapanna Dhammakaya, the coarse Sakadagami Dhammakaya, the refined Sakadagami Dhammakaya, the coarse Anagami Dhammakaya, the refined Anagami Dhammakaya, the coarse Arahat Dhammakaya, and the refined Arahat Dhammakaya. These physical forms are visible to everyone that practices meditation correctly, since they are universal phenomena. The level of meditative attainments is a result of each individual’s level of accumulated merit. *In all these coarse and refined physical forms, it is the refined Arahat Dhammakaya that can experience the permanent bliss of Nibbana right now in this existence.* When the outer physical form of the human being, celestial being, Form-Brahma being, or Non-Form Brahma being, which are the forms born of sensual lust, eventually comes to an end and die, the refined Arahat Dhammakaya will be pulled toward Nibbana to reside in the permanent bliss there forever.

The Lord Buddha said, “Nibbana is supreme happiness”. Therefore, the Lord Buddhas, the Silent Buddhas, and the Arahats, who have attained Nibbana, are living in supreme happiness”.

Nibbana is not to be confused with the places of refuge in other religious beliefs such as mendicants and Hinduism. At the beginning of the earth age, these individuals were considered citizens of the lower class. They were thinkers rather than practitioners of meditation. They traveled around with their bible telling people how to get to the Brahma Realm. They had never laid eyes on the Brahma being whom they considered to be their great refuge. When questioned, they could not answer or give any first-hand experience of the supposed phenomenon.

The Vijja Dhammakaya method of meditation is one way for the practitioner to gain access to the truth, hence all the answers. The truth must be witnessed by one self. It cannot be properly relayed to others. Intellectual thinkers should not disregard the practice prematurely, since what has been written in books cannot begin to give any detail of the truth. They need to put the books down for a time and start practicing meditation correctly. Only then will they be able to begin witnessing the truth that exists within all of us.

3. Nibbana is not subject to conditions because it is devoid of the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of the self.

A person that lacks personal liberty and personal power or is under someone else's power cannot do as he pleases. He cannot be happy under such circumstances. In the same manner, any phenomenon that occurs as part of a process or as part of something else, that phenomenon is said to be not of the self. It is not under its own dictate but exists according to the dictate of the whole process that conditions it. Such is the condition of existence within the three spheres. An existence that is not subject to an outward process, therefore is sufficient unto itself can only be found in Nibbana. Nibbana is desirable, inviting, and delightful.

The three desirable characteristics of Nibbana as mentioned above are but its predominant aspects, which demonstrate its desirability. The knowledge gained here should motivate us to practice meditation diligently until such time that we can attain Nibbana. The truth is Nibbana possesses many more desirable characteristics. For example, there are no arguments there. There is no exploitation of any kind. There is only peaceful serenity. The student can learn more details about Nibbana from other textbooks on Buddhism.

8.6 Preparation for Nibbana

Whatever destination we wish to travel to on earth, we must make preparation for the trip in terms of supplies, etc. Otherwise, we cannot get to where we want to go. In the same manner, to go to Nibbana, which is a place of permanent bliss and is infinitely far away, we must make the best preparation in order to reach it.

Although the preparation for Nibbana is unlike any preparation we make for trips on earth, both preparations have one feature in common. That is we have to learn the way from those who have already made the trip. The Buddhist Scriptures describe the preparation for Nibbana as the pursuit of perfections of four categories of knowers. They include:

1. The Lord Buddha
2. The Silent Buddha
3. The Lord Buddha's Chief Disciples
4. The Arahats

The length of time these knowers have taken to pursue their perfections is different because of the differences in their ultimate goals.

1. The Lord Buddha has to pursue His perfections by laying down His life countless lifetimes after countless lifetimes for at least four Asonkis and 100,000 earth ages. The longest length of time a Buddha spends in the pursuit of His perfections is 16 Asonkis and 100,000 earth ages. The length of time spent by a Buddha in the pursuit of perfections varies according to the category of the Buddha. The more beings He intends to lead to Nibbana, the more preparation, hence the greater length of time will be needed.

2. The Silent Buddha has to pursue His perfections for two Asonkis and 100,000 earth ages in order to attain enlightenment on His own without leading any being to Nibbana with Him. In terms of virtue, a Silent Buddha is second only to a Buddha.

3. The Lord Buddha's Chief Disciples (His left and right Chief Disciples) have to pursue their perfections for one Asonki and 100,000 earth ages in order to attain enlightenment after the manner of the Lord Buddha and to assist Him in leading beings to Nibbana. Virtue-wise, they are second to a Silent Buddha but far superior to regular Arahats, since their work is highly beneficial to mankind and other beings.

4. The Regular Arahats such as the great disciple 'Asiti' and other Arahats that excelled in different areas have to pursue their perfections for 100,000 earth ages.

The pursuit of perfections for the attainment of Nibbana is carried out in ten different areas of perfection. They include **the giving of alms, the observation of the Precepts, chastity, discernment, endeavor, forbearance, truthfulness, resolution, loving-kindness, and equanimity**. The earnest pursuit of perfections means that one is willing to give up a part of his body or even his life in the process. These endeavors will not be mentioned here but can be found in various textbooks on Buddhism.

The earnest pursuit of perfections is systematically carried out once one has received The Buddha's forecast as in the case of the Confirmed Bodhisatta. But for most Buddhists that are not yet on a direct course to Nibbana, the following preparatory steps should be taken.

1. Take the Triple Gem as our refuge by being constantly cognizant of their great virtues. The Triple Gem denotes the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha or Buddhist monks. We regularly support the Buddhist monks that practice righteousness. We learn the Dhamma and seek advice from them.

2. Abstain completely from all misdeeds and forget about the wrongful past.

3. Endeavor to perform good deeds such as giving alms, observing the Precepts, practicing meditation on a daily basis. Giving alms to the Buddhist monks that practice righteousness is the source of great merit, since they are the world's merit field. Each time we give alms, we should make the following wish.

“Let the merit earned from the offering of alms to the monks helps me toward my attainment of the path and fruit of Nibbana.”

4. Practice keeping our mind still. If we can keep our mind still all the time, we can attain Nibbana in the present (indirectly). This pristine state of mind gives us the desire to perform wholesome deeds for the ultimate purpose of attaining Nibbana. **These wholesome deeds include the giving of alms, the observation of the Five and/or Eight Precepts,**

worshipping the Triple Gem with scented articles and flowers, worshipping at and circumambulating the Cetiya, listening to the Dhamma, teaching the Dhamma, attaining the Jhanas, etc.

8.7 The Practice of Meditation for the Purpose of Attaining Nibbana

The student has now learnt some details about Nibbana. Next, the student will learn about the Middle Path Meditation that can lead to Nibbana. For this purpose, a paraphrase of the quotation from the Chief Disciple, Sariputra, will be used:

The Noble Eightfold Path includes Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

The quotation was the Chief Disciple's answer to the wandering ascetic '**Jambukhadaka**' about the practice that could lead to the attainment of Nibbana.

The quotation above makes us realize that the practice that will lead us toward Nibbana is the practice of meditation according to the Noble Eightfold Path. This practice is the same as the Middle Path Meditation given by the Lord Buddha in the Dhammacakkappvattana Sutta in the Isipatana Forest to 'Kondanna'. He was the first person to have attained enlightenment after listening to the Lord Buddha's sermon. At the time, a large number of celestial beings have attained enlightenment as well. The Teaching in this Sutta shows very clearly how the Eightfold Path is the framework of meditative practice for the purpose of attaining Nibbana. But such practice requires earnest self discipline and training in general, and diligent effort in the practice of meditation in particular.

To better understand the practical aspect of the Middle Path Meditation, we will cite part of the sermon from the Most Venerable Pramonkolthepmuni as follows:

"The Noble Eightfold Path or the Middle Path Meditation, when practiced correctly and perfectly, manifests itself as a clear, pure crystal spheres. The size of which may be as small as a star and as big as the moon or the sun. This clear, pure crystal sphere appears at the 7th base of the body. It is called the 'Sphere of the First Fruit' and is an indication that the practitioner has attained the entrance to Nibbana."

This Sphere of the First Fruit has a special quality in that the practitioner can experience its clarity and brightness at the 7th base of his body all the time. When he sleeps, he sleeps peacefully. When he wakes up, he does so feeling refreshed and joyful. Whatever work he does, he can accomplish it without ever feeling discouraged or expecting anything in return. The meditative attainments help the practitioner to have improved memory, to be cleverer and wiser, to be more creative, to solve problems quickly and effectively, etc. But for practitioners in their quest for Nibbana, the attainment of the Sphere of the First Fruit is just the beginning.

Therefore, they continue with their meditative endeavor in order to achieve higher and higher meditative attainments by allowing their mind to go through the Sphere of the First Fruit. As they do so, they find that the sphere enlarges itself continually just like the widening of the circle on the surface of the water after we throw a stone into it. The mind continues to go through the middle of the sphere until it passes through more spheres and more physical forms all the way to the Arahat Dhammakaya. This particular Dhammakaya is the very means of attaining Nibbana.

Conclusion

After the student has studied all the topics covered in this course-book, the student should come to understand how Nibbana is the ultimate end of every life in Samsara. The Lord Buddha teaches that Nibbana is real. The Lord Buddha is the supreme Knower. If we practice meditation according to the Middle Path until we can rid our self of all defilements and become a holy individual, we can experience the permanent bliss of Nibbana while we still have our human form. When we die we are destined for Nibbana. We will never be reborn again. We will be emancipated from the round of rebirth within the three spheres. We will be emancipated from the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of the self. Therefore, Nibbana is the place of ultimate peace and happiness. It is devoid of all sufferings. It is a place of absolute happiness just like what the Lord Buddha said, “Nibbana is supreme happiness.”

From the material in this course, the student has learnt that the realms of existence consist of the States of Happiness, which include the Human Realm, the Celestial Realm, the Form Brahma Realm, the Non-Form Brahma Realm; and the States of Unhappiness, which include the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Animal Realm. These planes of existence are under the dictate of the Three Characteristics and those trapped in these realms must go through the round of rebirth for countless lifetimes. The round of rebirth ceases only when the individuals can rid themselves of all defilements and enter the Lokuttara Realm, which is the highest plane of existence.

Of all the realms of existence in the three spheres, the Human Realm is the most special because it is a place where good and bad deeds can be accumulated to the maximum level. If good deeds are performed exclusively and to the point where certain defilements can be removed, then one is destined to spend his Hereafter in the Lokuttara Realm. If all defilements can be removed, then one can attain Nibbana. Therefore, Nibbana is the noblest goal of all human beings.

Now that the student understands the truth, he/she should discipline and train himself/herself by abandoning all misdeeds and accumulating only good deeds. The student should regularly give alms, observe the Precepts, and practice meditation in order to realize the true purpose of being born human, which is the attainment of Nibbana.